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**EVERYDAY FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES:
SCHOOLTEACHERS' MICRO RESISTANCE
AND (COUNTER) NARRATIVES TO
PATRIARCHY**

Heidi Fritz Horzella

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of
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**Centre for the Study of Women and Gender
Department of Sociology
University of Warwick**

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. The author carried out the work presented here.

Abstract

This thesis traces how feminist subjectivities are shaped, formed and lived through a focus on English schoolteachers from postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015) generations. The data is located in British society at a time of resurgence in feminist activism which is also simultaneously a period of 'postfeminist sensibilities' combined with the pervasiveness of neoliberal rationalities. In this contradictory scenario, and using a feminist approach and qualitative methods, this research is based on fifteen life story interviews that include five further in depth thematic interviews which have been thematically analysed.

The core arguments of this thesis are located in a feminist poststructuralist framework. This approach highlights the fluidity of selfhood shaped by experiences, relationality and language. Subjectivity within poststructuralism is understood as neither completely free nor absolutely determined and power relations are not only limiting but also become productive in forming the subjectivities.

Accordingly, this thesis explores how feminist subjectivities are constructed and shaped in multiple ways. In particular, the feminist schoolteachers in this thesis narrated the emergence of early forms of 'protofeminism' located in an unarticulated sense of injustice. They spoke of the influence of 'significant women' and the bonds of 'imagined sisterhood' as enabling a more fully developed awareness of gender injustice. They also talked of their practices to support gender justice, mostly non oppositional in form or as micro resistances to patriarchal practices. All these, I argue, are experiential resources for these women to draw upon in order to enable them to form alternative and counter narratives to patriarchal discourses, and thus construct feminist subjectivities and live feminist lives to resist patriarchal regimes in neoliberal times.

Introduction

I did not have a feminist teacher during my schooling, nor one feminist in my surroundings when growing up. My parents always encouraged me to have a profession: my mother emphasised the benefits of being economically independent, while my father urged me forward because of his own intellectual frustrations –he was forced to work straight after secondary school and was unable to pursue education further. But they were far from being feminists themselves. On the contrary, my brother and I grew up in a patriarchal family. My father was the unquestionable authority in the house. My mother, despite working outside of the home and having her own salary, was also under my father's authority. From early on I had the same intuition of some of my interviewees, whose stories form the basis of this thesis, that 'something was wrong' with this way of organising the world. It was an intuition I could not articulate. Nevertheless, I found companionship in the lives and writings of some women during my formative years. One of those was Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) an extraordinary Chilean poet, self-taught schoolteacher from the countryside and who came from an underprivileged background. Mistral was a writer, head teacher and diplomat; the first Latin American woman awarded the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1945. She and other women that I encountered had been a steady source of inspiration in my life as part of what I will term 'an imagined sisterhood'. I became attracted to women's stories and their struggles with patriarchy. When at university for my undergraduate degree, I found likeminded peers and some lecturers with whom to begin to explore those topics. My interest in women's issues turned into an academic concern. I wondered how other women lived and sustained a feminist life, what their struggles were and how they overcome difficulties. I looked for connections between my story and their stories. This thesis is the articulation of my search for connection between the personal and political, the individual and social, the biographical and historical; an inquiry on the multiplicity and complexity of processes involved in the construction of feminist subjectivities.

Accordingly, this research has been developed in the context of a tradition of feminist and sociological concerns. I am interested in some of the classical issues in feminist research regarding voice, representation, identities (Hughes 2013), experiences, resistance and the connections between personal and political (Zerilli 2015). It also follows classical sociological areas of concern namely everyday life (Neal and Murji 2015); the connections of history, biography and social structures (Mills 2000); the interplay of agency and structure (Giddens 1979) and the conceptualization of subjects as not totally determined nor completely free, autonomous beings following a Foucauldian scholarship (McLaren 2002). Following these traditions and my personal concerns I have come up with this research. This thesis is about the lives and stories of fifteen English feminist schoolteachers from postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015) generations. With them I explore their constructions of feminist subjectivities. This was done, mainly, through what I called 'adapted' life story interviews, explained in chapter three, methodology. I have used a narrative and relational approach to the process of constructing feminist subjectivities through lives, based on a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework as explained in chapter one.

Despite following a feminist and sociological tradition in terms of concerns, my research is distinctive because of several issues. The first pertains to the cultural and political moment in which this research has been carried on in British society. On one hand, in reference to the presence of feminisms, there have been several changes in the last decades in the context of the British society. There has been a backlash in the mid-1980s (Charles 2015; Faludi 1992), and a resurgence in feminist activism from the year 2000 onwards despite fragmentation, diversification and an emphasis on difference (Dean 2010; Charles 2015; Redfern and Aune 2010). Additionally, a 'postfeminist sensibility' has emerged, understood as the circulation of contradictory discourses about feminism in the culture (Gill and Scharff 2011), topics more developed in chapter three. On the other hand, there is an intensification and expansion of neoliberal logics and processes, with neoliberal rationalities populating all spheres of social lives including the making of subjectivities (Harvey 2005; Gill and Scharff 2011). Particularly, the educational sector has been transformed by neoliberal policies (Robertson 2007), and an intensification of teachers' work (Apple 2013). Furthermore, neoliberal discourses are in alliance with neoconservative discourses, which arguably are posing challenges to feminism (Phipps 2014). It is within this macro

scenario where my research is situated and the one that informed my research design as I have focused my analysis on the experiences of English female schoolteachers from postwar and neoliberal generations. It is sociologically challenging to think about how these macro processes have their counterparts on the micro level where the processes of subjectivity construction occur. Subjectivities have become an area of research, which is having more attention after the postmodern turn in social sciences. Nevertheless, with some exceptions (Rose 1999; Brown 2003), research on the experiences of subjects and 'the psychosocial seem to be missing from most work on neoliberalism' (Gill and Scharff 2011, 8).

Another distinctive focus of my research is on a specific kind of subjectivities, the one of my participants, feminist schoolteachers, actually under researched in contemporary Britain as discussed in chapter one. They are distinctive subjects in the sense that they do not represent the majority or dominant ways of thinking. They represent a minority as those who use their agency to resist patriarchal practices and thus make them an interesting group to research. Within this environment of patriarchal practices and discourses, they seek to find ways to confront this in order to construct something different. Therefore, it is worth bringing these feminist teachers' voices to the fore, contributing to their visibility and recognition under such scenarios. More importantly it is to learn from their strategies to resist and deal with patriarchy.

In terms of feminism, it is also a less developed niche of research in the sense that feminist schoolteachers are 'everyday feminists', a concept developed later. They are not necessarily public figures or leaders, not especially powerful in the sense of their positioning in society. They are less visible in comparison to feminist activists in organizations, who are being more researched (Hercus 2005; McGuire, Stewart and Curtin 2010). To work with everyday women, like feminist schoolteachers, is because I am interested in the everyday battles of women who search for autonomy, self determination and emancipation. I would like to highlight the everyday feminists' contribution to challenge patriarchy. How women that are not 'the famous ones' nor feminist leaders make their input to the collective project of feminisms and make their contribution to gender equity at a micro level within their spaces of influence. The emphasis on everyday life is also coherent with the sociological idea that 'the micro becomes an effective and

illuminating terrain through which to understand and recognize and examine social change, lines of social division, social conflict and abstract conceptualization' (Neal and Murji 2015, 313). In my case, the everyday life of feminists is the micro space in which to illustrate how subjectivities are constructed. To have access to these stories and experiences allows me to understand how everyday life feminisms are carried out, how they are possible, and how emancipatory practices are enacted nowadays.

This research, based on the experiences of what I have defined as feminist teachers, emphasises the connections between self and others, individual and social, biographical and historical, past and present, and the connections of personal, political and professional. In that sense, I am working with 'hyphens' (Fine 1994), the connections of different aspects all through life.

Furthermore, teaching, education and schools are sites of political struggle. Schools can be thought of as 'landscapes of antagonism' (Newman 2013) where different politics meet and 'struggles over knowledge' occurred (Weiler 1998, 19). This is one of the spaces in which feminist teachers in this research predominantly conduct their feminist politics. They can operate as agents of change in their schools and have a role in broadening the views and opportunities for their pupils. The influence they may have is central to building a society without gender discrimination. Teachers' life experiences, their politics and pedagogical approaches are linked to their hope for their students. Teachers' gender values and their pupils' concepts of masculinity and femininity are relevant for the consequences 'such values might have on pupils' learning experiences' (Arnot and Phipps 2003), and the way teachers' expectations influence student performance and career choices (UNESCO 2010). In that sense, it is interesting to research how feminist subjectivities are enacted in the pedagogical arena in neoliberal times.

The research focus and research questions

Returning to my research focus, it is situated in the micro, looking at the micro-macro interfaces, from a feminist and sociological perspective. It is part of broader area of research regarding the construction of subjectivities, addressed also as identities (Lawler 2008). I use the concept of subjectivities to highlight the fluidness of selfhood through life and the construction of it in a relational way, given centrality to everyday experiences. This relationality implies that the individual is always part of the social: experiences and the

process of sense making is embedded in the social. Particularly, my focus in this thesis is the construction of schoolteachers' feminist subjectivities. I draw from a feminist poststructuralist framework the idea of a flux in selfhood and the important role of language in narrating a life and making sense of the self. I use a narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities, which means recognising that narratives are constitutive of the human experience. Through narrating a life individuals make sense of themselves and the world around them. I make a distinction between story and narratives, understanding the first as all the tales my participants told me, and the second as the common features in the way those stories are constructed. All these issues are developed in more detail in the framework discussed in chapter one.

I am interested in how the women in this research became feminist. My emphasis is on the process, not in the results per se. By this I mean I am more interested in how a feminist subjectivity is constructed, I am less interested in what kind of feminist my participants have become. This distinction is important as it draws attention to a shift in understandings of identity from the modern to the postmodern conceptions. In the 'Modern' views about the self the weight of analytic focus was on the 'what' of identity. In the post-modern the analytic interest is the processes through which we come to be, on the 'how'.

I am interested in how individuals actively constitute themselves by working on the selves, what Foucault called 'subjectivation' (McLaren 2002, 166). But I am concerned with the work on the selves oriented towards emancipation, which means how feminist subjectivities are constructed in connection with practices of resistance to the dominant patriarchal discourses and practices of freedom. Nevertheless, I recognize that subjects are also engaged in reproducing dominant discourses actively by disciplining themselves, as they exist in society, not outside of it; domination operates from 'outside' and 'inside' the self. I acknowledge that the subject is never completely free to act nor completely determined by discourses; freedom is a practice situated in the context of dominant discourses, following Foucault's' conception of subjectivity (McLaren 2002). For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on the active work the self does in resisting patriarchal dominant discourses and practices. I acknowledge practices of domination but they are the background of my research, they are analytically put into 'stand by'.

Research Question

How are everyday feminist subjectivities constructed in the case of English female schoolteachers from postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015) generations, through narrating their lives, situated in historical and institutional contexts with dominant patriarchal discourses and practices?

Sub question:

1. How are feminist subjectivities sustained in everyday life? With what resources, influences, relationships?
2. What kind of narratives are my participants constructing?
3. What are the narratives of these women doing in relation to the constructions of feminist subjectivities?
4. How are feminist subjectivities reconstructed in the pedagogical and activist engagement of my participants in the neoliberal era?

My argument is that feminist subjectivities are constructed in relational ways to everyday life experiences; meaningful events, encounters¹ and what they think and do through the narratives of the participants' lives. Specifically, this means that feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to events in time, that is to say biographical and historical events in the postwar and neoliberal era (chapter four); to encounters with significant others, particularly significant women through interpersonal relationships and through imagined sisterhood with women accessed by reading (chapter five); and in relation to their 'thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) with a focus on their pedagogical and activist work in neoliberal times (chapter six). At the same time I put forward that this takes the form of a diversity of (counter) narratives.

As I outline in chapter two I have used a feminist approach and qualitative methods for this research. I have collected fifteen narratives through adapted life stories interviews; basic information for each of my participants through a characterisation form; then five second rounds in depth thematic interviews as part of the life stories, which I have addressed as 'core narratives'; email communication with my participants with some data; printed materials offered by my interviewees, and finally a group interview to help me with the

¹ I took the expression events and encounters from Newman 2012.

analysis and validate my data. These materials have all been approached using thematic analysis based on a narrative understanding of the lives and subjectivities of the participants. In addition, the narratives were analysed in order to identify types of narratives and meaningful experiences, events and encounters through life.

Some conceptual clarifications

There are a set of concepts that I use throughout this thesis necessary to be define here in order to understand my arguments. These refer to gender, gender regimes, patriarchy, feminists and feminisms, temporalities and generations.

Gender, gender regimes and patriarchy

The concept of gender refers to the sociocultural constructions of women and men; including specific cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, which involves power relations and status. It includes aspects of ‘...sexuality and reproduction; sexual difference, embodiment, the social constitution of male, female, intersexual, other; masculinity and femininity; ideas, discourses, practices, subjectivities and social relationships’ (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, 5). Gender can be understood as a social structure that operates at ‘multiple levels’, comprising the ‘micro level of interactions and the macro level of changes in social systems’ (Connell 2002, Walby 1990 and 2009 cited in Walby 2011, 103). I used the concept of gender along the thesis to refer to how gender is part of the construction of subjectivities and how patriarchal gendered stereotypes, expectations and gender discrimination are present in the life of my participants, the schools and society in general.

Gendered constructions are historically located, therefore they change through time and space, constituting different gender regimes. ‘Gender regimes’ are defined as ‘a set of interconnected gender relations and gendered institutions that constitutes a system’, and which involves ‘institutional domains as the economy, polity, violence and civil society’ (Walby 2009 in Walby 2011, 104). Walby made two main distinctions between gender regimes, the domestic and public. In domestic gender regime the ‘processes of power are predominantly exclusionary’, in comparison with the public gender regime in which they are more segregated

(Walby 2011, 105). The public gender regime have taken also different expressions as the 'social democratic gender regime' and the 'neoliberal gender regime', each corresponding to the social democratic and neoliberal social formations of present western societies (Ibid.). The main differences are that the neoliberal version of modernity 'is marked by high levels of inequality and shallow levels of democracy [...], while the social democratic variety has lower levels of inequality and deeper democracy' (Walby 2011, 113). These last two main forms of patriarchal gender regimes are the ones present in postwar and neoliberal England. These different forms of gender regimes have some level of overlap and are changing.

As Walby (2011) indicates, gender regime is an equivalent concept to patriarchy. I prefer the use of the term 'patriarchy' in the sense that it is more political and powerful in terms of visibility of male dominance and privileges at both the macro and micro level. I use the concept 'patriarchy' throughout the thesis in a broad sense, as a 'widespread social system of gender dominance' (Wilson 2000) to highlight the systemic and institutional dimensions and also as an equivalent to the concept 'gender regime' following Walby (2011). At the micro level, I use it to refer to, a patriarchal family or a patriarchal father, as in the case of Gabriela analysed in chapter four. But also, I used it to address the macro level when refereeing to patriarchal institutions or societies, as in chapter six when focusing on teachers' subjectivities in neoliberal times. I am aware of the origins of the concept in what is called 'classical or historical patriarchy' that refers to the authority of the patriarch, the elder male authority in a kinship group (Wilson 2000). Nevertheless, I used it in a similar way to the feminists of the 1970s to highlight the term's systemic nature. I agree with the criticism to a 'unitary patriarchy' which implies a 'totalizing, essentialist and inaccurate' idea of a 'single social form across place and time' (Wilson 2000, 1495), or a reductionist approach to the analysis of gender relations (Pollert 1996 cited by Walby 2011, 104). Nevertheless, this is not the only way of conceptualizing patriarchy (Walby 2011; Wilson 2000). Patriarchal gender regimes are practices and discourses that take different forms according to the historical times and settings.

Feminist and feminisms

Feminisms is what have challenged patriarchy throughout history and I use it alongside my work to refer to ideas, projects, movements and subjectivities that challenge patriarchy. My definition of feminism is an inclusive one, which also contains the different feminisms, emphasising the plural. Nevertheless, this does not mean that anything is feminist. I used Walby's conceptualization of feminisms which point to 'the pursuit of the goal of gender equality by individuals, groups, projects and governmental programmes' and it also include the 'wider goal of the advancement of women, on the grounds that both these goals require the project to have a transformation of gender relations before they can be achieved' (Walby 2011, 5). It also involves hooks' idea that the 'feminist struggle takes place anytime anywhere any female or male resists sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression' (hooks, 2000, xi). Additionally, feminism 'implies a case for emancipation' where 'gender relations are unjust/oppressive, and people are able to choose to change them' and involve actions 'of resistance, agency and emancipation' (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, 7). It implies an ontological stance that assumes 'the present social construction of women as oppressive' (Stanley 2013b, 14). In connection with this it also involves questioning, challenging and having a critical stance to the ways in which individual lives, institutions and society are gendered.

Regarding feminism I have used the expression 'everyday feminism' to refer to the feminist practices located in the everyday life, in micro spaces, at a micro level. Having a conceptualization of the everyday life as 'moment of translation and synthesis in which the "big" folds into, shapes and is concretized in, but also co-constituted by the "small"' (Neal and Murji 2015, 813). In that sense, 'everyday feminism' is part of everyday life in any space, not necessarily located in social movements and organizations. It is ordinary or common regarding the scale, a small scale and the locations, local generally and in micro spaces. When thinking of my participants, the schoolteachers, as 'everyday feminists', I mean they are part of a category of common people in the sense they are **anonymous**; not positioned as extraordinary people, famous, part of elites, dominant classes, or influential public figures present in public spaces, media or debates. However, I acknowledge at the same time they are not ordinary as they do extraordinary things despite the places in which they are positioned in the context of

restrictive scenarios. They are engaged in micro level power relations. In that sense working with feminist schoolteachers has been my approach to 'everyday feminisms'. Moreover, the concept of everyday feminism is related to 'day to day actions', things that happened on a daily basis, as Bates (2014, 16) had used to refer to 'everyday sexism'. I am aware of the feminist critique that Smith (1987) proposed of the 'everyday world as problematic', nevertheless, I use the concept differently. She highlights how the everyday life of people is organized and determined by factors that are beyond their located positions in the everyday worlds and that feminist sociologists want to problematize in order to understand and change oppressive gender relations. I assume that the participants of this research are problematizing the everyday world, but the focus of the research is what they think and do on a daily basis to change patriarchal discourses and practices.

In addition, the term feminism is 'contentious' and 'even stigmatised' (Walby 2011). Accordingly, not every woman in my research self identify feminist. However, I argue that is not because of the phenomena 'I'm not a feminist but', which implies rejection of the term but endorses feminist goals. Some of my participants, from both generations, did not like being labelled as 'feminist' because of the multiple political positions they can have regarding other inequalities and an interest in an open stance. Despite that, for the purposes of this research, I include them as feminist not in terms of forcing them into a category, but because of their thinking and doing, which I acknowledge goes beyond feminism in many of the cases as feminist goals are imbricated with social justice goals. I consider that all my participants are feminist under my inclusive definition, acknowledging the complexities of it, which I address throughout the thesis when exploring the construction of their feminist subjectivities throughout their lives. It is important to state that in relation to their feminisms, it is not my interest in this research to identify which kind of feminist they are; nor in terms of the classical distinctions of radical, liberal, socialist and Marxist feminist, nor in terms of waves of feminisms. My interest lies in how a feminist subjectivity is constructed through life and therefore these categories became less central as they overlaps or changes within a lifetime, or are less vital for the everyday life as feminists. Although some of my participants have been explicitly part of the women's movement, enacting feminist activism in the past or the present, for the majority their feminism is expressed in current times mostly in their pedagogical work and some of them through their activism, individually or in

the unions. In general, the participants can be considered left wing in orientation, and some have made explicit mentions of their labour feminism, socialist or Marxist feminism, but the common feature between them all is the overlap of feminist goals with broader social justice agendas.

Regarding the analogy of waves of feminism, not one of my participants used it to define themselves. For the purpose of this research, I use the concept 'second wave feminism' to refer to the feminist movement around the 1960s and 70s, in a historical way, not linking it to a specific theoretical position, with reference to the 'first wave' associated generally with the suffragists. When my participants used the concept 'second wave feminism', it was to refer to literature or the feminist movement of the 1960s-70s. It is not my aim to discuss the different waves of feminisms. In spite of that, I acknowledge the scholarly debates questioning the idea of 'waves' of feminism in terms of implying a fixed and certain homogeneity and progressive development in western feminist that is not necessarily the case (Dean 2010; Hemmings 2012). Yet some authors still have found the analogy useful, as for instance David (2014) studying 'second wave' feminist academics and Evans (2015) regarding 'third wave' feminism in Britain and US. Nevertheless, in terms of my interest in subjectivities and my understanding of everyday life feminisms, those distinctions are not defining my participants' sense of self, despite acknowledging that they have been influenced by these different kinds of feminisms in some cases.

At the beginning of this introduction I mentioned my feeling of 'something wrong'. This is something that came forward in the narratives of some of my participants. I elaborated this as 'protofeminism'. This is an expression borrowed from the testimony of a feminist academic referring to her girlhood (David 2014). For the purpose of my research I have elaborated 'protofeminism' as a concept that allows me to put together a set of strong feelings and sensations of discomfort, estrangement, rage, frustration, injustice, something being not right that my participants had as girls or later on when facing gender violence or discrimination. This has been acknowledged by other research on feminists, a sensation of 'something wrong' (Mitchel 1973 in Middleton 1987); or 'feelings associated with social injustice' for which women did not have a language to speak about (Hercus 2005); or referred as the 'unpleasant feelings of conflict, marginality, alienation, and tension' that arose because of contradictory experiences as

girls and women (Middleton 1993, 94). In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed refers to her experiences of 'sensing wrongs' or a 'feeling of being wronged. You sense an injustice'. She explains that 'a sensation is not an organized or intentional response to something [...] you are left with an impression that is not clear or distinct' (2017, 22). This set of emotions implies a 'gut level awareness' (Jaggar 1996 in Ahmed 2017) of injustice regarding gendered experiences that I have elaborated on as part of a protofeminist subjectivity, which is not articulated at the time lived, only after recalling the memory. I use it to illustrate the process of subjectivity constructions especially when my participants were girls or young women, such as in the cases of Bridget and Gabriela in chapter four. This is thought as a developmental state.

Temporalities, time and generations

Throughout the thesis, issues of temporality are present as part of the life stories, the narratives, the context, events in biographical and historical times, and the relationships to significant others real and imagined. In chapter four and five I have constructed and used a 'Biographical Timeline' for each of my 'core narratives', as an exercise to visualise and situate the stories in their lifetime. However, I do not put forward a comprehension of lives only in a linear way. Different temporalities are part of the construction of subjectivities, as 'temporality is a basic category of our experiences and cognition' (Klein 1994 cited by Hughes 2002, 131). Specifically, in life stories there are different temporalities involved. There is the time of the narrative, a nonlinear time associated with the ways the narrator chooses to tell the story, where past and present are interwoven. It also involves the chronological time, a linear time where events and encounters can be situated historically (Horsdal 2012). In that sense, my research implies different temporalities. There is a linear temporality when I distinguish the different historical times (postwar and neoliberal times) in which my participants have been born, and the historical contexts, differentiating the postwar and neoliberal era. There is a linear concept of time when constructing the biographical timelines of my participants and grouping them under the umbrella concepts of generations; the postwar and the neoliberal generation. Nevertheless, there are nonlinear temporalities implicated all through the process of construction of the feminist subjectivities. It is implicated, as said before in the time of the narrative, it is implicated when past and present are re-elaborated upon in the narrative in synchronicity, in

a time without time. A non-linear time is also present in the cases of the 'imagined sisterhood' they constructed with women through readings.

Another issue related to temporality is the concept of generation I deploy. What I want to stress is the shared historical time lived through, the events, and the zeitgeist. In that sense it is equivalent to the concepts of 'cohort' or 'social generation' that refer to 'people within a delineated population who experience the same significant event within a given period of time', and is the way in which Mannheim used it (Pilcher 1994, 483). Yet I use it in a loose way, not necessarily meaning homogeneity. I am interested in the commonalities of the individuals of the same generation, but I am also interested in the commonalities across generations. On the other hand, I am also interested in the differences inside generations in order to explore the multiplicity of ways of constructing feminist subjectivities within a zeitgeist. In that sense, I consider that the concepts of generation or cohort have some limitations, as they downplay the diverse experiences of individuals. That is why they are used as a general tool. It is also important to state that this is not a comparative analysis of different generations, even though I compare and contrast the narratives of individuals belonging to different generations. This was something I did not proactively plan as part of my sampling, it happened as the research unfolded, therefore, most of the cases are from the postwar generation. However, I was interested in having a diversity of experiences represented in the life stories, therefore I made an effort to have more participants from the neoliberal generation. Another aspect to identify at this point is that by classifying an individual by generation, I am not assuming that that indicates anything about their subjectivity, that is to say I do not suppose a neoliberal subjectivity for the neoliberal generation.

The structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized in six chapters. The first chapter presents the body of literature in which my research is situated and the theoretical framework I have used. In the first section of the chapter, I discuss empirical research done on the lives, identities and subjectivities of feminist schoolteachers, female educators and the gendered life of teachers. In addition, I analyse the gendered nature of neoliberal educational reforms that affect teachers' lives. Then, I present work on feminist academics and activists stressing the forming of identities and subjectivities. I follow this with some research from

the neoliberal era about women's work and politics as well as the construction of subjectivities of young women. In the second section of this chapter, I outline and discuss my theoretical framework drawing on feminist poststructuralism. I discuss and define my core concept for this research: subjectivities. Then I develop the way in which subjectivities are connected with power, agency and resistance; and lastly, I present what is meant by a narrative approach within my research towards the construction of subjectivities.

In chapter two, I outline my methodological approach. This includes discussion of the qualitative methodologies undertaken for this research, explaining my feminist approach. I present my methods of data collection, mainly adapted life story interviews with a narrative approach; a characterisation form; second round in depth thematic interviews; email communication data; print material handed by the interviewees and a group interview. This is followed by a description and some reflections from the research process and fieldwork, and the procedures for carrying out thematic analysis with a narrative approach. Then I provide a broad characterization of my participants and the different generations to which they belong. Finally, I analyse and discuss the potential and benefits of the adapted life story interviews.

Chapter three provides a general historical, social, cultural, political and economic context in which the narratives of my participant are situated: the postwar and neoliberal eras. I provide a historical timeline and characterization of each era. The main focus is to understand the *Zeitgeist* of each time, the presence of patriarchal practices, and the manifestation of feminisms as ideas and movements.

Chapter four bridges the historical context and *Zeitgeist* to the personal narratives of three of my respondents. I address in depth the constructions of their feminist subjectivities in relation to events in time. These events are mainly related to the presence of patriarchal practices and the influences of feminist ideas and feminist movement within their lives. It emphasises the formative experiences connecting their biographies with historical issues. Each narrative is presented with a biographical timeline to illustrate the life experiences of Bridget, Gabriela, and Virginia.

In chapter five, I expand upon this analysis of the formation of selfhood through the ways in which significant others, specifically women, contribute in the process of becoming a feminist. This includes an initial section in which I investigate significant women encountered through interpersonal relationships illustrated by the narratives of Andrea and Esperanza. The second section considers the impact of significant women encountered through reading, which I have conceptualise as an 'imagined sisterhood' using several of the participants' narratives.

In chapter six, I turn to the way in which my participants construct their feminist subjectivities in relation to their pedagogies and activism engagements. I explore how their 'thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) produces an enactment of micro- resistance to patriarchal and neoliberal practices which in turn contribute to the development of their feminist subjectivities.

Finally, I draw together the findings of this thesis in respect of my core research question: how are everyday feminist subjectivities constructed in the case of English female schoolteachers from postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015) generations, through telling their lives, situated in historical and institutional contexts with dominant patriarchal discourses and practices? Overall, I argue that feminist subjectivities are constructed and shaped in multiple ways. In particular, the feminist school teachers in this thesis narrated the emergence of early forms of 'protofeminism' located in an unarticulated sense of injustice. They told about the influence of feminism when growing up and their experiences with gender discrimination. They spoke of the influence of 'significant women' and the bonds of 'imagined sisterhood' as enabling a more fully developed awareness of gender injustice. They also talked of their practices to support gender justice, mostly non-oppositional, as micro resistances to patriarchal practices. All these, I argue, are the resources for these women to draw upon in order to enable them to form alternative and counter narratives to patriarchal discourses, and thus construct feminist subjectivities and live feminist lives to resist patriarchal regimes in neoliberal times.

Chapter 1 Literature review and theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research literature and theoretical framework concerned with feminist schoolteachers' lives and subjectivities. These topics are discussed here in order to locate my research question and empirical concerns within the relevant fields of literature, and to identify the conceptual tools to undertake my analysis. As presented in the introduction, my main research question is concerned with how feminist subjectivities are constructed through life in the case of English feminist schoolteachers from different generations (postwar and neoliberal).

The chapter is organised in two main sections. The first section addresses the empirical research that intersects feminist lives, identities and subjectivities and the gendered lives of teachers. Initially I present what is known about feminist teachers' lives and educators' lives regarding their identities and subjectivities; and some issues about feminist pedagogy. Then I present the work done on female teachers, educators, and the gendered lives of teachers. Later I discuss the literature on feminist academics and activists with a focus on identities and subjectivities. I follow with some references to women's work and politics in neoliberal times, and the construction of subjectivities of young women and girls, which shed light on the way women's subjectivities operate in neoliberal times. The discussion of those investigations is organized in order to situate my work and identify intersections. Special attention is given to the ways of becoming feminists, teachers' identities or subjectivities, and resistance to patriarchal practices. This is because these topics are related to my analysis in chapter four, five and six. It will also show the slightly different direction I took in relation to the field because of my focus on the lives and subjectivities of teachers instead

of professional identities or exclusively the pedagogical issues (see for instance Journal 'Feminist Teacher'²).

The second section of the chapter discusses theoretical issues and presents the conceptual tools used to approach subjectivities, identities, self and subject constructions, mainly drawing on a feminist poststructuralist framework. Regarding this framework I follow McLaren (2002) and her critical approach to Foucault to conceptualize subjectivities as relational, multiple and historical, approaching them in non reductive and non dualistic ways. I begin discussing how subjectivity has been conceptualized under a feminist poststructuralist framework taking into account potentials and limitations. I present my own definition of subjectivity, conceptualized as based on experiences and socially constructed. This is a relational concept of subjectivities. Particularly, I focused on how subjectivities are constructed in relation to meaningful events (chapter four) and encounters³ with significant women (chapter five), and how they are reconstructed all through life in everyday practices in what my participants 'think-do' (Davies 2016) as analysed in chapter six. Then I develop the way in which subjectivities are connected with power, agency and resistance, issues central for chapter six. I then introduce and discuss my narrative approach to subjectivities, which means stressing that narrating a life is constitutive of social realities and subjectivities. In that sense, I use narratives as an ontological and epistemological departure point, not as a methodology or analytical framework. I stress the role of language, narratives and stories in terms of making sense of the self and others. Therefore, this narrative approach to subjectivity construction slightly distances my work from those focused on narrative and discourses (Munro 1998) or narrative and technologies of the self (Tamboukou 2000, 2003). In addition, I follow the work of Plummer (2001, 1995) especially regarding the role of personal narratives and stories for individuals, communities and society, as explored in chapter four and five in more depth. In spite of his different theoretical framework; that of critical humanism, his conceptualization of the subject as contingent, multiple and

² <https://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/ft.html>

³ I have used similar concepts to Newman (2012), to refer to key moments and decisions that she addressed as episodes and encounters.

historical still coincides with the feminist poststructuralist framework I am using.

Gender, feminist and female schoolteachers' lives

This area of knowledge is relevant to my research question insofar as it deals with female teachers' lives and experiences, including feminist lives. It also addresses identities and subjectivities. I organize the discussion thematically in order to highlight what is known and where research is needed. There is a wealth of work on gender and teachers' lives but the focus on 'feminist teachers' is not abundant.

Feminist teachers and educators' lives, identities and subjectivities

When focusing on feminist teachers' lives, there is a relative lack of current research, especially regarding schoolteachers. The available research is not contemporary and very little work is located in Britain (see Coffey and Delamont 2000 and Joyce 1987) with a few studies focused on other countries such as Canada (Coulter 1995), USA, (Weiner 1994 and Weiler 1988, 2003) and New Zealand (Middleton 1993, 1989 and 1987). Research about feminist teachers in Spanish speaking countries is relatively scarce. Some examples are the work of Fernández (2006) in Nicaragua; Jiménez, Vega y Rebollo (2013) and Mañeru (2004) in Spain, and other historically oriented research in Chile (Oñate 2017), Mexico (González 2016) and Argentina (Barrancos 2008). Coffey and Delamont (2000) discussed the research done about feminist teachers, women teachers and lesbian teachers. They addressed teachers' experiences in relation to identities, careers, histories and biographies; highlighting 'the difficulties they face in combining their politics and beliefs with the classroom and staff room realities' (Coffey and Delamont 2000, 73). Weiner (1994) indicated that research done in the late 1970s and 80s on feminist teachers was initially focused on 'problematizing gender as an educational issue', then promoting 'change strategies or solutions' for feminist change and then identifying different feminist perspectives to challenge sexist practices in schools (Weiner 1994, 76-78). The concerns of these researchers were related to practical matters in order to promote change and challenge patriarchal practices in schools and therefore research on teachers was undertaken in relation to those preoccupations.

In addition, there is a slightly greater amount of literature related to action research and feminist teachers' lives that indicates how they worked and struggled to promote changes in schools, focusing on 'strategies and resources to raise students' consciousness about gender, race, class and sexuality' (Cohee et al. 1998, Adler et al. 1993, and De Lyon and Mignuiolo 1989 all cited in Coffey and Delamont 2000, 67-69). This literature is linked to other bodies of research such as feminist pedagogy and feminist classrooms to which I refer later in this section.

Despite the predominant practical orientation of research done with feminist teachers, there is research that has paid attention to their lives, identities and biographies. Research done on the lives of postwar feminist educators in New Zealand (Middleton 1993, 1989, and 1987) has identified several factors in becoming feminist. First, experiences of 'discrimination or marginality' were considered as a precondition to adopt 'feminist educational theories in later life' (Middleton 1989, 67). Another factor identified was the exposure to 'radical social theories with which to articulate their personal experiences of oppression and their deep feeling of alienation from sexist, racist and /or class-based ideologies in their own education and their teaching context' (Ibid.). And lastly, Middleton mentioned the 'continuing marginalization within schools because of their teaching styles and their explicit feminism' (1989, 67). Moreover, the educational experiences provided the women in Middleton's research with frameworks to understand their lives within a structural context, articulating 'personal experiences of female subordination or marginality as outcomes of broad social inequalities in access to power and to knowledge' resulting in connecting the personal with the political (Middleton 1993, 93). Through a life history approach Middleton explores the relation to early life and past experiences at school and university. These issues are also present in similar ways in the narratives analysed in chapter four and five in terms of making sense of lived discrimination and the articulation of a feminist stance, but with less emphasis on formal education, including all formative experiences.

Similar findings are found in Weiler's (1988) work with secondary teachers in the USA, which identified that they were influenced by political and social movements. The participation in educational experiments and a sense of social justice related to their own lives and their consciousness of sexism and oppression. This connection between ideas and experiences appears to be

an interesting point for deeper exploration in the lives of my participants (chapter four and five) and also in the current context of neoliberal education as developed in chapter six. Weiler's work is also interesting regarding possibilities of resistance and alternatives ways of being a woman. She explains how teachers, within the boundaries of structural constraints, resist and develop 'feminist counter-hegemony'. Weiler conceptualizes resistance as individual ways of acting and feminist counter hegemony as a 'more critical theoretical understanding' and 'organized and active political opposition' (2003, 293) highlighting the collective engagement.

Weiner's research (1994) on feminist and women schoolteachers in Britain, and her review of other research on educational feminism during the 1980s and 90s, showed, from a feminist poststructuralist approach, the feminist discourses present among teachers and in the educational arena. Those educational and feminist discourses of different kinds influenced research, policies and practice in education. Specifically regarding teachers, she shows the type of feminist discourses present amongst feminist teachers in the UK at that time who were challenging sexist practices at schools. She states that the prevailing discourses amongst feminist teachers were 'equal opportunities' discourses and 'anti-sexist' or 'girl-centred' discourses. The equal opportunities discourse, deriving from liberal feminism, had reformist strategies in the context of 'existing educational structures'. The second, 'anti-sexist' discourse, was based on radical feminism whose approach aims to 'challenge unequal power relations between the sexes' in order to transform 'patriarchal practices within school structures and curricula' (Weiner 1994, 78). The focus of Weiner's research was on the link between educational discourses and prevailing feminist discourses with educational practices, curriculum and pedagogies that construct and challenge gender inequalities at school. This research operates as background information for my research, as my focus is on the construction of feminist subjectivities, not on feminist discourses.

Some specific research focuses on the difficulties feminist teachers find in their workplaces. A study done in a small group of first year student teachers in Canada documented their experiences and struggles with sexism both in the staffroom and classroom (Coulter 1995). This work also states the similarity of the experiences of these teachers with 'women's movement activists, teacher educators, teacher unionists and others committed to anti-

sexist education' (Coulter 1995, 47). Similarly, these difficulties with students and colleagues were also found in another study with white teachers in inner London, indicating that teachers were 'being treated as a joke because of their views', or they are 'openly criticise or deviously undermine' (Joyce 1987, 76). This same research mentioned the isolation of teachers from networks, the difficulties of working with inadequate material and the consequential extra workload.

There is another body of literature dealing with feminist pedagogy (Crabtree, Sapp and Licona 2009; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003; hooks 1994, Gore 1993; Luke and Gore 1992; Weiler 1991) and feminist classrooms (Macdonald and Sánchez 2002; Cohee et al. 1998) that connect with feminist teachers' work. This literature provides intellectual context to understanding the pedagogical frameworks and pedagogical 'thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) of my participants that connect with their subjectivities as addressed in chapter six. Feminist and critical pedagogies deal with theories and strategies engaged with democratic and emancipatory education (Gore 1993; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003), articulating a broader educational vision as instructional aspects of pedagogy (Gore 1993, 17). Common points are the importance of experiences, the affirmation of personal and social empowerment toward social transformation and problematizing authority in relation to emancipation (Gore 1993, 25). Furthermore, both pedagogical approaches highlight the connections with social and political movements struggling to eliminate oppression (Ibid.). Feminist and critical pedagogies also point to similar practices for the classroom (Ibid.).

However, feminism challenges critical pedagogy by stating the 'failure... to engage forthrightly with the question of women, anchors within the context of female experience and knowledge construction' (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003, 16). Ellsworth (1989) for instance, critique the 'rationalist assumptions' present in the literature about critical pedagogy which are 'highly abstract and utopian' (1989, 297). Accordingly, 'the emancipatory functions of cognitive learning' had been questioned, thereby challenging 'the privileging of reason as the ultimate sphere upon which knowledge is constructed' and arguing 'for the inclusion of personal biography, narratives, and the explicit engagement with the historical and political location of the knowing subject' (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003, 11). This is coherent

with the feminist rejection 'of the masculinist subject in history as foundational to all truth and knowledge' (Luke & Gore 1992, 7). In addition, feminist pedagogy provides a richer critique of authority and power issues. For example, 'conscious of the power of various subject positions' of teachers; giving core attention to 'personal experience as a source of knowledge'; and leaving space for the expression of views from 'people of different races, classes, and cultures' (Weiler 1991, 449). In addition, a feminist pedagogical point of view would also be productive in particular by addressing goals such as '...demystify canonical knowledge, and clarify how relations of domination subordinate subjects marked by gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, as many other markers of difference' (Luke & Gore 1992, 1). Feminist pedagogy in its applied version deals with issues such as assumptions about knowledge and knowing, approaches to contents, teaching objectives and strategies, classroom practices, and instructional relationships (Crabtree, Sapp & Licona 2009, 2). Educational institutions are acknowledged as sites of struggle over knowledge and social relationships (Weiler 1988) and therefore a space for transformation, a 'location of possibility', (hooks 1994), where to enact a 'progressive, holistic, engaged pedagogy', which allowed to 'collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress' (1994, 207). Nevertheless, this body of literature does not address the interconnection between pedagogies and the life of teachers, and in general focuses on theoretical issues or strategies developed for the classrooms.

In summary, there is a small body of research on feminist teachers' lives that is not contemporary. These findings are related to teachers' engagement in practices to promote change in schools and classrooms, the influences in terms of lived experiences they had to become feminist as well as difficulties they faced in the workplaces and the classroom. The most relevant issues for my research are those related to their identities and influences, and the possibilities of resistance to patriarchal practices, as illustrated in the work of Middleton (1993, 1989, 1987), Weiner (1994) and Weiler (1998). My contribution in this body of research is that I deepen the processes by which a feminist subjectivity is built through life. I look at the connections between past and present experiences, especially in chapter four when highlighting events in time that contributed to the construction of feminist subjectivities; the influence of relationships with significant women in chapter five; and situating my participants' feminist subjectivities in the neoliberal era, connecting the personal, professional and political.

Female educators' identities, subjectivities and gendered lives

Regarding female teachers and female educators there is a slightly more abundant albeit not contemporary set of literature. In contrast, the gendered life of teachers, the gendered character of educational policies, schools and schooling is a much more developed area. Regarding female teachers and educators the focus in this body of research lies on the profession and the gendered qualities of teachers' work. Important for my work is the research on teachers' professional identities and the relations established with women's identities, that is to say how teachers' identities intersect with women's identities, identifying which were the conflicts, the difficulties and challenges as female subjects and professionals. Issues on women's authority as teachers, women as carers, and women as intellectual subjects were discussed in that body of research. In sum, that research addressed how teaching was constructed as a female profession and how women processed and transgressed those definitions in their own identity constructions. For instance, there is research on the lives of female teachers and educators (Tamboukou 2003, 2000 in UK; Munro 1998, Biklen 1995 and Grumet 1988 in USA and Tamayo 2016 in Mexico); and some historical research on female educators (Crocco, Munro and Weiler 1999 in USA; Fitzgerald and Smyth 2014 in Anglo speaking countries; Ballarín 1995 in Spain, González 2008 in Mexico, and Rivera 2012 in Chile). Some literature addressed the agency of female teachers engaged with social change, political action and progressive activism stressing women as 'authors of their own life' (Casey 1993 in USA); and radical teachers working in disadvantaged contexts or who have an explicit commitment to principles of social justice (Raphael 1995 in UK).

Research addressing lesbian and queer teachers is another area of specialization in this body of work (Harris and Gray 2014 with two chapters UK research based: Rudoe 2014 and Gray 2014; Clarke 1996, Epstein 1994, Griffin 1991, Khayatt 1992 and Scott 1989 all cited in Coffey and Delamont 2000; and Catalán 2017 in Chile). This LGBTQ teachers' literature addresses how negotiation and transformation of current policy and social discourses occurs in schools (Lambert 2015) addressing the experiences of teachers. Issues about identity and self disclosure, teaching sexuality, the provision of role models, and the queering of the curriculum have been topics for this kind of research (Coffey and Delamont 2000, 70).

In terms of narrative research and subjectivities on female teachers there is some research on British contemporary and past female educators through auto/biographical writing (Tamboukou 2003, 2000). Using a Foucauldian framework and a genealogical analysis, Tamboukou identifies how through writing these women construct different selves and find space for negotiation and resistance. Tamboukou approaches writing as a technology of the self (2003) in the sense that this is the process by which these women produce a subjectivity. She also documented the multiplicity of selves present in women teachers and the paradoxes lived by women educators navigating around images of 'women teachers as mothers, scholars, students, workers'. Tamboukou analyses the polyvalence of discourses around mothering, and how they are mobilized through time and space, private and public. It is in these 'paradoxical spaces' that education has provided 'where the female self has attempted to surpass closed boundaries and to question the dichotomy of the feminized private and or the masculine public' (Tamboukou 2000, 476). In these spaces and through 'unstable, ambivalent and contradictory subject positions', women have been trying 'to recreate patterns of their existence and imagine new gendered relations' (op. cit.). The work of Tamboukou helps illuminate my research, especially chapter six, in the sense that professional and personal is interwoven in complex ways and education operates as a 'paradoxical space' in which there is potential for transformation, at the same time that gendered restrictions are imposed on women's possibilities of development.

Another study using a narrative approach and closer to my own work is Munro's (1998) research, looking at the agency and resistance of women teachers. She discusses the gendered construction of teaching and how female teachers resisted those discourses. Her research analyzes how women teachers in the USA construct and negotiate their identities through and against contradictory images of schoolteachers, which included 'the spinster, the school ma'am, the old maid and the mother-teacher'. These 'binary images' represent on one side, the 'mother-teacher' 'as the altruism of women', 'the self-sacrificing, nurturing woman who complies with her natural duty, in which unconditional love of children signifies the attainment of true womanhood'. Conversely, the image of the spinsters is associated with 'embittered, sexless, or homosexual' (Oram 1989 quoted by Munro 1998, 4). This dualism 'perpetuated the dominant dichotomy of women as good or bad, virgin or vixen and obscures the complexity, agency and

richness of our lives' (Munro 1998, 4). However, the life histories told in her research showed a non-traditional resistance to this stereotyping. For example, her teachers rejected that teaching was 'woman's true profession'; denaturalizing teaching and constructing 'self representations that decentralizes a unitary self' (Munro 1998, 108). My research differs from this work as I focus on the construction of feminist subjectivities and link those subjectivities with specific times, the postwar and neoliberal era in Britain. Nevertheless, the work of Munro is useful to address the complex and contradictory ways in which women resist gender norms and in this way exercise a specific kind of agency, two issues specifically developed in chapter six.

Other research with poststructural inspiration focuses on oppressive discourses working on women teachers and its appropriation or negotiation (Khoddami 2011; Cammack and Kalmbach 2002; Biklen 1995 and Grummet 1988). As Biklen (1995) states there are different discourses available for teachers, most of them of 'control and restraint', which are negotiated and contested. She also mentions discourses of professionalism, and also 'discourses of possibility' related to ideas of feminist and critical pedagogy, or in work against racism, which were more exceptional. Nevertheless, one discourse present in several studies is the discourse of teaching as a 'woman's profession' (Munro 1998). More recently, Cammack and Kalmbach (2002) identified in students of pedagogy the same discourses about teaching as women's profession, associated with the care and service to others. Before, Grummet (1988) has linked those discourses with motherhood and the devaluated status of female teachers related to the naturalization of their profession.

Other contributions, focussed on the gendered life of teachers and the gender division of work in the teaching profession (Acker 1999, 1994, and 1989), pointed to a similar stereotypical vision of women. For instance, female teachers were represented as 'natural nurturers' or as 'unintellectual babysitters'. Moreover, male and female teachers' 'high expectations... for themselves derived in part from widespread beliefs about women's work and its 'labor of love' nature ...' (Acker 1999, 115). Other research explored male teachers and masculinities (Connell 1985, 1995), especially considering their negotiated identities as men in caring professions (for instance, Simpson 2009), and the patriarchal discourses which associate the male with authority

(Cammack and Kalmbach 2002). All this research set the background where the subjectivities of feminist teachers are constructed. This consideration of discourses based on stereotypical conceptions of man and woman are still present today but reworked in complex and nuanced ways as addressed in current times in what follows regarding educational policy.

Under the neoliberal era, teachers have been affected by a set of educational reforms. Scholarship has established the gendered nature of educational reforms that are affecting the work, subjectivities and lives of teachers (Arnot 2007, Dillabough 1999, Lambert 2004, Mahony 2000 in UK; Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012 in Ireland; Blackmore 1999 and Lingard and Douglas 1999 in Australia; and Robert 2016 in Argentina). Mahony (2000) points out that the set of reforms that address teachers since the 1980s are based on a very narrow, traditional conception of masculinity. In addition, the emphasis on 'teacher professionalism' lies in gendered assumptions of the male and rational subject as opposed to women in dualistic and essentialised modes of representation (Dillabough 1999). Moreover, the structural reforms 'have regendered educational systems, ensuring a more masculinist "hard core" in systemic policy making and more feminized "periphery" in schools- the retraditionalisation of masculinities and femininities' (Lingard and Douglas 1999, 162); or what Arnot (2007, 223) in England has described as the 're-masculinisation' of the educational policy. The gendered character of educational policy and regulations on teachers have been documented specially under New Labour government by Lambert (2004). In line with that, Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) state the gendered nature of new managerialism needed to undertake neoliberal policies and reforms in schools and Higher education in Ireland. Furthermore, Lynch (2010) discussed how a 'culture of carelessness' based in Cartesian rationalism is enhanced with new managerialism in the case of higher education, that resonates with what is happening in schools. In relation to educational leaders, Blackmore (1999) finds that they struggle with dominant discourses that 'privilege "hard masculinity" and "strong leadership"' (1999, 208).

Moreover, I think it could be established a parallel between neoliberal processes in higher education and schools regarding what Gill (2010) has pointed out as the 'silenced injuries of neoliberal academia'. She shows how the 'neoliberalisation of the workplace' in Higher Education made academics a 'model of neoliberal subjects', who self-monitor themselves, are flexible,

creative and have internalized new forms of auditing and calculating, which implies costs in terms of their experiences of 'stress, anxiety and overload' (Gill 2010, 241). As developed in chapter six, many of these issues are part of the scenario in which teachers resist patriarchal practices and negotiate their feminist subjectivities.

In summary, the literature on female teachers and educators' identities, subjectivities and gendered lives has mainly dealt with dominant gender discourses about women and teaching, and how women negotiate those discourses. Emphasis has been put on the process of domination, on how gender is reproduced by social institutions and by individuals. In spite of not being my focus, this literature contributes with a characterization of the gendered aspect of the educational spaces and the gendered discourses circulating around teaching, which are still present today, with some nuances and new reworked forms of patriarchal discourses. Moreover, I identify that very little work addressed issues of negotiation and resistance of female teachers to patriarchal practices as the studies of Tamboukou (2000, 2003) and Munro (1998). My research is in line with these works, however with nuances. My focus is on the process of the construction of feminist subjectivities through the whole life of teachers, emphasizing the connections between personal, professional and political, rather than making the subject positions or professional identities the focus of the research. In addition, my narrative approach to subjectivity construction is thematic, stressing the relational aspects of subjectivities with events and significant women within their lives. I am not analyzing discourses or which technologies of the self are used by each woman to make sense of herself and produce a subjectivity.

Feminist and women's lives under neoliberal times

A linked area of concern to feminist and women teachers, refers to scholarship on feminist academics that seems a well developed locus (see David 2014, 2016 and Pereira 2014, 2017 in different countries; Gill 2010 in UK; Morley and Walsh 1995 in USA; Berríos 2005 and Martinez 2012 in Chile; and Tarducci 2010 in Spain) especially in the present era of neoliberal academia. Although I am not going to offer a full review, I want to mention some of the relevant literature to my field of exploration. The extended work of David (2014) has been illuminating, providing context and illustrating some

issues that could be common with schoolteachers. Her work with second wave feminist academics in different countries, approached through a collective biography of three different cohorts from the postwar era, showed how they became feminist and academics. Nevertheless, this book is much more concerned with making visible the contribution of feminist scholars in shaping and transforming higher education, and showing how feminisms change the lives of these women. Another interesting issue is how academic feminisms have become 'anti-pathetical' in neoliberal universities (David 2014, 175). This is an issue to explore in the case of feminist teachers in neoliberal educational systems.

Another body of literature useful for my research is related to the lives of feminist activists (Hercus 2005 in Australia; McGuire, Stewart and Curtin 2010 in different countries; Gargallo 2014, Peña 2014, Valdés 1993 and Valdivieso 2012 in Latin America; and Araiza 2017 in Spain). Some of the experiences and struggles of feminist activists are similar to feminist teachers. Hercus (2005) has researched how women become feminist activist in Australia. Her work highlights 'significant and transforming events' and the encounters with 'significant others' that had contributed to building awareness and becoming engaged in feminist collective action. She develops a 'fractal model' to understand feminist subjectivities that 'combines oppositional ways of knowing, feeling, belonging, and doing within an environment that is constituted by both opportunities and barriers' (2005, 159). She also states that there is a multiplicity of ways of becoming feminist with a 'variety of routes and at different point in their lives' (Hercus 2005, 27). She highlights the historical and relational nature of identity and expresses that 'narratives preserve continuity within change for both individuals and collectivities'. As Polletta, quoted by Hercus argues, they "explain what is going on in a way that makes an evolving identity part of the explanation" (Polletta 1998 in Hercus 2005, 36).

Other work on narratives of feminist activists from China, India, Poland and United States (McGuire, Stewart and Curtin 2010) has looked at the intersection of personal and 'the social, cultural and political context of an individual's life coinciding to create the capacity to respond critically to normative expectations' (2010, 121). In addition, what appears illuminating for my own research, especially for chapter six when addressing union engagement, is that these activists 'described the power of organization or

institutional experiences in shaping and sharpening their political socialization'; and furthermore, all of them state that 'the exposure to activist organizations and charismatic leaders inspired their participation as activist and encouraged' their development (McGuire, Steward and Curtin 2010, 122). These issues are useful in terms of exploring the process of becoming a feminist, and particularly the influence of significant others on this development as I address the influence of significant women in chapter five. Some research has found that feminist identity is associated with the 'exposure to feminism', conceptualised as feminist family members, friends or having women's studies courses (Aronson 2003 and Stake, Sevelius and Hanly 2008 cited in Kelly 2015). Other research indicates that experiencing sexism is another issue associated with a feminist identity (Liss and Erchull 2012, Nelson et al. 2008, Reid and Purcell 2004 cited by Kelly 2015). This issue is similar to Middleton's (1993, 1989, and 1987) findings with feminist educators mentioned before. Regarding feminist activism, Kelly (2015) stated that feminist identity was inconsistently associated with feminist activism in her qualitative study in knitting communities where 'individual resistance or everyday feminism' was stressed by her participants when talking about activism (2015, 81).

The research of Newman (2012, 2013) seems interesting to illuminate links between women's work, activism and politics under neoliberal times, which could be useful to understand feminist teachers' engagement in pedagogical and activist work. Researching women's political biographies and working lives' accounts in the past 50 years in the UK, Newman shows the way by which women constructed 'spaces of power' at a local level 'by working the contradictions inherent in neoliberal projects, and have used them to lever resources and other forms of power in order to pursue activists goals'. Moreover, Newman's findings state how women workers and activist operate with 'multiple understandings of feminism and its articulation with other axes of struggle' (2013, 22).

There is an area of research around subjectivities that has flourished recently, which is concerned with young girls (Gill and Scharff 2011, Ringrose 2013, Davies et al. 2001) and young women's political movements (for instance Leccardi 2016). What is interesting in this body of research for my own inquiry is the connections between female subjectivity constructions, neoliberalism and postfeminist cultures these researchers establish. Using

feminist poststructuralist frameworks, this work addresses how different discourses are used in the construction of subjectivities and how subjects negotiate them to build their subjectivities. Some research deals with how subjectivities are produced by processes of objectification initially, and more recently there is an emphasis on subjectification, which means how the subject internalizes domination and makes it an internal process of constructing a self, based on those dominant discourses (Gill and Scharff 2011). Some research has used Foucault's concept of technologies of the self to address girls' constructions of embodied femininities, in other words, the use of different techniques in which a subjectivity is constructed through self-surveillance and by disciplining and producing the body in a 'feminine way' (Gill and Scharff 2011).

In summary, regarding the frameworks and methodologies used in the research related to female teachers and educators, there are different approaches, with a major shift from gender theory to poststructural feminist theories. Generally, from the 1970s onward research on feminist and women teachers used gender theory from different feminist perspectives. Liberal, radical and socialist feminist approaches were predominant in feminist educational research; and regarding teachers' practices and discourses there were mainly liberal and radical approaches (Weiner 1994). Gender theory applied to research on teachers pointed to the differentiated value, roles and characteristics of female and male teachers. It linked the broader conceptions of femininity and masculinity associated with the private and the public sphere of life, with how other female roles established by society as mothers and carers were brought into school. Around the 1990s onwards, feminist research faces the challenges posed by poststructuralism (Coffey and Delamont 2000). This shift implies consequential changes in the methodologies and the focus of feminist research. Feminist researchers reacted to poststructuralism in different ways. As McLaren (2002) states, and specifically regarding Foucault's work, some rejected it (Braidotti 1994; Brodribb 1992; Hartsock 1998), others used it with some reservations (Alcoff 1990; Bartky 1990; Fraser 1989) and others adopted it (Butler 1990, 1993; Bordo 1993; Hekman 1990; McWhorter 1999). In educational research around teachers, the topic of discourse became a central issue in understanding teacher's identities and practices. Feminist scholars became interested in patriarchal discourses that were present in teachers' lives (Coffey and Delamont 2000). Researchers also used other qualitative

methods, as narrative approaches of life stories, and auto/biographical writings of teachers. Specifically, research from a feminist poststructuralist framework had been approached through discourse analysis and put more emphasis on how dominant discourses are negotiated by teachers (Biklen 1995). Following similar lines, there is research on subjectivities but emphasising how processes of objectification and subjectification are present in the construction of the subjectivities of women teachers or feminist teachers (for instance Khoddami 2011). I have not found research on subjectification regarding teachers, which is an issue much more developed currently on girls and femininity constructions (Gill and Scharff 2011). I found less work on how emancipatory discourses are articulated in teachers' lives; and also how subjectivities are constructed in a way that allows alternative discourses, referring to how women teachers resist or negotiated oppressive discourses (Munro 1998; Tamboukou 2003, 2000; Middleton 1993, 1986 and Ryan 2001 in adult education in Ireland focusing on feminist subjectivities and emancipatory discourses).

My research interest lies on how subjectivities are constructed in a way that resists domination, objectification and subjectification; how female subjects negotiate the impositions of neoliberal and postfeminist cultures. In other words, my research is centred on those subjectivities constructed in order to move towards emancipation, engage in practices of freedom and resistance to patriarchal practices. In the case of feminist women schoolteachers, I have not found contemporary research on their subjectivity constructions and especially on how subjectivity is constructed resisting dominant gender identities and in a feminist way. Furthermore, narratives, which have been used widely in social science, are less used to address female teachers' subjectivities and feminist schoolteachers' subjectivities, with some exceptions. Therefore here I found space for exploration about a specific kind of subjectivity, feminist subjectivity, and one that is constructed through narratives, which is a less developed line of inquiry, with feminist schoolteachers, who have been overlooked as research subjects in the context of neoliberal times. My research follows in some way current research tendencies in terms of using a feminist poststructuralist framework to research subjectivities, but takes a slightly different route because of use of a general narrative approach to subjectivities. What the literature has revealed is a potential for a more generalized use of discourse analysis, some work using narratives and some work using technologies of the self,

each of which are conceptual issues explained in the second section of this chapter.

In summary, there is an area of less explored research that lies in the intersection of literature about feminist and women's lives and women's subjectivities and resistance to patriarchy in the contemporary context of neoliberal times. Given this, the main contribution of my research is to focus on feminist schoolteachers, an under research area, and the construction of feminist subjectivities throughout their lives and their resistance to patriarchal discourses and practices in neoliberal times. Moreover, there is a general need to update the literature on feminist schoolteachers, in particular the lack of current studies in the United Kingdom and relating to the contemporary neoliberal context. Another contribution is the application of a narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities which is less frequently used in the research around feminist teachers' lives. The theoretical and conceptual issues regarding subjectivities and narratives are part of the discussion undertaken in the next section.

Subjectivities and narratives, a theoretical framework

A feminist poststructuralist conceptualization of subjectivities

A feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework informs my approach to the construction of feminist subjectivities throughout this thesis. Despite feminism and poststructuralism being potentially contested terms (McLaren 2002; St. Pierre 2000), with different and sometimes contradictory positions, there are some conceptual tools and ways of thinking that resulted in being useful for my work. By these I point to non binary ways of approaching social phenomena, and an historical conception of the subject. This last notion is what I conceptualize as subjectivity, a subject implicated in power relations, with the capacity to engage in practices of freedom and at the same time produced by discourses and social practices. My version of feminist poststructuralism could be thought of as a 'weak' or 'lighter' version of feminist poststructuralism (Echavarría 2009). This is because I used some of the conceptual tools available and an ontological and epistemological stance that work with the tensions between feminist poststructuralism and feminist standpoint. For the purpose of this thesis I follow McLaren's (2002)

interpretation of Foucault as well as other feminists. My approach recognizes the centrality of language and therefore I have a narrative approach to subjectivities. Consequently, my methodological tools are life stories, which allow the narration of a whole life, as presented in chapter two. This explains why I do not follow the methodologies of Foucault's poststructuralism. In that respect, I draw on Plummer's work (1995) on sociology of stories to address the link between subjectivities and narratives that are later explained in this chapter.

More specifically, I use a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework because it offers a productive approach for researching subjectivities. First, providing non binary ways of thinking and second, offering a fluid conceptualization of the subject by the critique of the unitary idea of the subject. Challenging binary ways of thinking in feminist, poststructuralist scholarship means focusing on the ways in which social phenomena exhibit at the same time both evidence of oppression and empowerment (Hughes 2002a, 14). This is relevant for feminism as it needs a conception of the subject that can account both for processes of normalization and for resistance to the norms (McLaren 2002, 54). In other words, non dualistic approaches address the constraints imposed on women and at the same time, the possibilities of action, practices of freedom and resistance. These ideas are central for my understanding of feminist subjectivities as not completely determined by structural dimensions and possible to be constructed by my participants acknowledging certain constraints. This is a 'double move in the construction of subjectivities', as 'exhibiting agency' but at the same time 'being subjected' (St. Pierre 2000, 502). These ideas are developed in chapter four, five and six. In particular, I analyse constraints and opportunities for feminist subjectivities to be constructed in chapter four, regarding meaningful events lived by my participants, and in chapter six issues about constraints and resistance under neoliberal times are highlighted.

The second issue relevant for my conceptualization of subjectivities relates to the critique of a unitary subject, which implies a historically, situated subject. The 'criticism of humanistic universal norms as excluding difference' done by Foucault 'resonates with feminist criticisms of the humanistic subject as implicitly white, male, and European' (McLaren 2002, 165). The idea of a unitary subject is present in western philosophy and therefore in much social

science research. The criticisms refer to a conception of the subject that is already gendered, defined in a dualistic way, associated to ideas of stability and essence and an inner core. The social construction of the category 'man' and 'woman' as oppositional and the 'the favouring of "man" over "woman", has historically served as a powerful organising principle' (Lambert 2004, 58). It implies the common positioning of women as 'lesser forms of the masculine individual' which derive from a 'paradigm of the self' based on the 'experiences of the predominantly white and heterosexual, mostly economically advantaged men' (Willett, Anderson and Meyers 2015). Feminist critiques in modern western philosophy reject the 'Kantian ethical subject' and the utilitarian conceptions of the 'homo economicus' that underlies many approaches in social science (Willett, Anderson and Meyers 2015, 12). These criticisms involve a conceptualization of the self that moves away from homogenous, transparent and coherent ideas of the self. That is to say, one who speaks 'with a single voice', is removed from 'its cultural or interpersonal setting', one that 'side-lines the body' and is only reliant on rationality (op. cit. 2015, 12). It also implies that rationality and mind is coded as masculine in opposition to the feminine realm of emotions, body and irrationality (Irigaray 1985 and Lloyd 1992 cited in Willett, Anderson and Meyers 2015). These feminist criticisms reveal the 'partiality of the ostensibly universal Kantian ethical subject and homo economicus' that conceptualize the self as,

1) androcentric because they replicate masculine stereotypes and ideals; 2) sexist because they demean anything that smacks of the feminine; 3) masculinist because they help to perpetuate male dominance; and 4) elitist because they perpetuate other associated biases, including heterosexist, transphobic, racist, ethnocentric, ableist, classist, and, arguably, speciesist biases' (Willett, Anderson and Meyers 2015, 5).

Therefore this poststructuralist framework enables thinking about 'the subject as one of process rather than fixity' (Hughes 2002a, 14). This idea is useful because I am approaching subjectivity constructions through the life of my participants as a never ending process, with nuances, transformation and even contradictions. Furthermore, a notion of this kind is open to find a plurality and diversity of possible feminist subjectivities, not prescribing only one form.

Regarding the limitations of using Foucault's work for feminist research, my uneasiness relates to the recurrent feminist critique of 'gender-blindness' and 'androcentrism' of his work. As McLaren states 'his almost total neglect of gender, women's issues, feminism, and sexual specificity' is especially visible in his 'earlier work by an inattention to gender, and in his later work through his explicit focus on the male ethical subject' (McLaren 2002, 80). Another feminist critique of Foucault is related to his conceptualization of the subject, which took two different directions. Feminists focusing in the archaeological (first) period of his work and 'the disappearance and dissolution of man', assume that 'he wants to do away with subjectivity altogether' (McLaren 2002, 60). The other critique related to the genealogical period (second), sustains that the 'subject is thoroughly enmeshed in power relations, produced by disciplines and through discourse. Thus, they conclude Foucault presents us with a determined subject, a passive body incapable of autonomy' (McLaren 2002, 60). Nevertheless, McLaren addresses these criticisms approaching all phases of Foucault's work and stating that they do not do justice to his conception of the subject because they have put less attention on his later work, where he develops subjectivities, technologies of the self and practices of freedom. She also recognizes the tensions in Foucault's conceptualization of the subject which is nevertheless, as McLaren states, inherent to the attempt of thinking about subjectivity in non-reductive, non-dualistic ways (2002, 166).

For the purposes of this thesis, I draw on McLaren's (2002) interpretation of Foucault's work, especially his later phase that deals with subjectivities, technologies of the self and governmentality (McLaren 2002, 60). It is in his 'later work' where Foucault offers 'a view of the self that is socially constituted and capable of autonomy and engaging in practices of freedom' (2002, 54). This way of thinking about subjectivities allows me to understand how subjectivities are not only produced by dominant discourses, but at the same time actively constructed by individuals. Consequently, this conceptualization of subjectivity helped me to address my research question, how female schoolteachers construct feminist subjectivities situated in historical and institutional contexts that generally restrict women and where they are surrounded by patriarchal discourses. McLaren explains Foucault's conception of subjectivities as produced by discourses but at the same time as actively produced by individuals. Subjectivities are embodied and manifest through practices which at the same time 'enable and constrain'

them, and where 'freedom is conceptualized as situated within material, institutional, and disciplinary matrices' (2002, 3). This means understanding subjectivity as 'multivalent and complexly constructed' (2002, 60), as McLaren develops below,

Power is relational, discourses are polyvalent, and disciplines are multifarious. Subjects thus produced are likewise complex, both she who is speaking and she who is spoken of, both dominated and resisters, both constrained and enabled by various disciplines, practices, and institutions (McLaren 2002, 59).

Here I acknowledge the complexities of the processes of unpacking subjectivities, which I do specifically with feminist subjectivities both imbricated in domination and resistance. McLaren reaffirms this by arguing that a Foucauldian framework allows 'to articulate a notion of subjectivity that is embodied, and constituted historically and through social relations; and that this embodied, social self is capable of moral and political agency' (2002, 14). This capability for agency, which I analyse focusing on practices of resistance, situated in time and space, is central for my understanding of the everyday feminist. This also links to experiences, another core issue in my approach to subjectivities, which have been highlighted by feminists and poststructuralists. For instance, De Lauretis stresses experiences and affects when she defined subjectivity as the 'patterns by which experiential and emotional contents, feelings, images and memories are organized to form one's self-image, one's sense of self and others, and of our possibilities of existence' (1986, 5 in Tamboukou 2000, 465). Other authors also considered experiences as part of subjectivities emphasising 'the experiences of the lived multiplicity of positionings' in a present moment, therefore partial and historical, showing how the social operates through subjectivities (Blackman et.al. 2008). McLaren, referring to Foucault's conceptualization of subjectivities, states 'that it is experience that results in a subject or subjects', not the subject as a precondition for experience (McLaren 2002, 61). This idea of Foucault is elaborated in relation to his rejection of 'an a priori notion of the subject' as if this is 'the condition for the possibility of experience, which he ascribes to phenomenology and existentialism; or as transcendental consciousness, which he attributes to Descartes and Kant' (McLaren 2002, 62). For my analysis, experiences are the starting point, subjectivities as emerging from women's everyday life experiences. Specifically, as approached in chapter four, subjectivities are

constructed in relation to biographical and historical experiences, circumscribed to certain meaningful events; and as developed in chapter five, experiences are approached as encounters with significant women; leading finally to chapter six where subjectivities are analysed in relation to experiences of pedagogical and activist engagements in neoliberal times. This way of conceptualizing experiences is also connected to a non-dualistic approach in terms of what individuals think and do; as Davies (2016) named it a 'poststructuralist thinking-doing'. What people do, is connected with what they think, there is no separation. However, the presence of contradiction and tensions in life as socially situated, implies a conflict 'between what one is compelled (externally and internally) to think-do, and what will be ethical thought-action' (Davies 2016, 6). These approaches to experiences are illuminating especially in relation to my analysis in chapter six regarding what my participants think-do by focussing on neoliberal times.

Another dimension of subjectivities that is central to my work, is the continuous process of sense making of the self and others. This was already stated in the former definition of De Lauretis and also stated by Foucault as 'those forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself' (Foucault 2005 (sic) in Atkins 2005, 208). This approach has consequences in terms of 'recognising the dialogic and interactional character of the self in a sense that forces the conclusion that the ontological basis of subjecthood is best thought of in terms of "self-and-other"' (Stanley 1996 quoted in Stanley 2013, 10). In addition, as other feminists have put it, subjectivities are 'dynamic and relational'; this implies a 'multilayered, interconnected' self which 'may grow through sustained interactions with the mother, family and community rather than in decisive breaks from them' (Willet, Anderson and Meyers 2015, 12). These conceptions are linked with ideas about relational autonomy and transformative views of relationality, coming from psychodynamic approaches for instance as Kristeva and Chodorow, or from poststructuralist stances such as Butler and Heynes alongside others (Ibid). I agree with this relational approach, which I explore especially in chapter five, where I analyse my participants' subjectivities in relation to significant women as part of their process of making sense of themselves in relation to others.

Another dimension of subjectivities relevant for my research is time and space. As stated by several authors and Foucault included, subjectivities are

historically constituted and at the same time constituted by the subject in a specific time and space (Kelly 2013, Blackman et al. 2008, McLaren 2002, Atkins 2005). Stanley, for instance, writes about 'the instability of the subject' indicating by this 'the situated, contextual and also temporally grounded character of what it is to be a person' (Stanley 2013, 9). Accordingly, I conceptualize subjectivity as a sense of self in process of construction and reconstruction never ended through a lifetime, based on experiences situated in a specific socio-historical context. This 'historical framework' (McLaren 2002) to approach the conceptualization of the subjects, allows me to situate feminist teachers' subjectivities in the times they lived, especially in chapter four that link events in the lifetime of my interviews, and chapter six where the focus is on neoliberal times, the historical period in which the stories are told. My emphasis in those chapters is on how individuals construct subjectivities during their lifetime, what they selected and pushed forward relating to the times in which they lived. There are different temporalities implicated in the process of constructing subjectivities, biographical and historical times, linear and non-linear temporalities as past and present are actualized at the moment of articulating a narrative subjectivity. Moreover, subjectivities are also located through different socio-spatial dimensions. They refer to the different social locations and ways the subject is positioned in these spaces. For instance, subjectivities are placed inside families, schools, professions and unions and in relation to parents, peers, adults, friends, and colleagues for instance, as explored in chapter four, five and six. In addition, their positioning refers to different axes of social differentiations, as those of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, as well as between others.

Another issue present in Foucault's work, refers to 'the fragmentary, composite, and multiple nature of subjectivity constructed discursively through language and social practices' (Atkins 2005, 206). Some feminist poststructuralists, such as Butler, follow this idea conceptualizing the self as an 'unstable discourse node' (Butler 1990 cited in Willet, Anderson and Meyers 2015). I slightly distance myself from that position. I agree with a dynamic conception of subjectivity, but it is not necessarily fragmentary. I argue for multiplicity and transformation of subjectivities through life, but with relative degrees of coherence. Certainly, my methodological approach (explained in the next chapter) contributes to seeing subjectivities as less fragmented in terms of lived experiences. My use of adapted life stories and

a narrative approach to subjectivities requires a certain degree of coherence in order to make sense of the multiplicity and complexity of subjectivities expressed in a story. When people tell their life stories, they try to 'give some coherence, some point to their existence, even when this fails', they are 'ethical tales' (Plummer 2001, 252). Moreover, individuals have a desire for coherence or as put by Blackman et al. (2008) subjectivity 'is sometimes held together by a desire' or desire of identity (Bonder 1998).

Subjectivities and the productive use of power

In this research, power is analysed at a micro level and linked to the production of feminist subjectivities through a focus on practices of resistance. I follow those interpretations of Foucault that consider power as a positive and productive relationship, not only destructive (Atkins 2005, 207; also Simons 2013 and McLaren 2002). This means power is not only expressed in domination, but also in the capacity of an individual to be engaged in practices of resistance and freedom. As McLaren states following Foucault, power is not the same as domination; only when 'relations of power ossify, lock together and become fixed' domination appears (McLaren 2002, 166). This conceptualization of power relations allows me to explore how micro resistance to dominant patriarchal discourses is possible in the construction of my participants' feminist subjectivities, acknowledging, at the same time, the presence of sex/gender domination.

Some authors use the concept of subjectivities to emphasize 'how power operates' and work on what Foucault called 'governmentalities' that refers to 'the ways in which these governing practices quite literally "get inside us" to materialize or constitute our subjectivities' (Gill and Scharff 2011, 8). This approach focuses the attention on the ways in which subjectivities are constructed by dominant discourses. This means they use subjectivities 'in order to signal the extent to which we see contemporary modes of power operating increasingly on and through the making and remaking of subjectivities, and through "governing the soul"' (Rose 1989 in Gill and Scharff 2011, 8).

In this research however, my interest lies in how power operates to resist dominant discourses and practices. The focus of my attention is on those aspects of subjectivities related to self construction and directed to produce

alternative subjectivities to those present in the dominant patriarchal discourses and practices. I am concerned with practices of resistance oriented towards emancipatory possibilities, situated in the context of patriarchal and restricted scenarios. In Foucauldian terms, I concentrate on the 'practices of freedom and resistance' as part of 'subjectivation', the processes in which individuals actively constitutes themselves (McLaren 2002, 166). This does not mean I do not recognize the technologies of self that individuals use to discipline themselves, reproducing dominant discourses and practices; nor the presence of dominant discourses that are shaping subjectivities, and domination broadly speaking. I acknowledge those aspects of subjectivities related to dominant discourses and how they operate in the construction of subjectivities. Nevertheless, those processes are the background for my inquiry, and in some way they are put into 'stand by', in order to deepen how practices of resistance are possible when constructing a feminist subjectivity. I just 'pause' analytically those issues to put forward this line of inquiry that focuses on one side of the coin, which are practices of resistance.

For the purpose of this thesis, I understand practices of resistance, or more specifically micro resistance, as one of the particular modes that agency can take, and I am focusing on them. I acknowledge that this is not the only way that agency can take. As Mahmood states, 'agential capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms' (Mahmood 2005, 15). The meaning of practices of resistance (and agency) needs to be evaluated in each cultural setting. They are context specific and contingent. I am not prescribing a specific content for the practices of resistance. I am analysing those practices in contemporary Britain, which are oriented towards destabilizing patriarchal discourses specific for this context. It is a located, situated, contingent definition that, if applied to other contexts, needs to be re-elaborated. More specifically, resistance is addressed at individual level, referring to small scale actions directed against mainstream patriarchal practices and discourses. I draw on the concept of Butz and Ripmeester (1999) of 'protean or everyday resistance' that is done in oppositional and non oppositional ways. Particularly, non oppositional resistance is conceptualized as 'off kilter resistance', referring to those 'often ambiguous' practices that 'productively circumvent power, rather than actively opposing it' (Butz and Ripmeester

1999). These resistance practices occurred in what Rose called the 'little territories of the everyday' (Rose 1999).

The concepts of resistance and agency are still under debate and defining them is not an easy or straightforward enterprise (Mahmood 2005; Madhok, Phillips and Wilson 2013). In this research, I used agency as a broader concept that includes resistance, and agree with Mahmood that agency is 'not simply a synonym for resistance to relations of domination' (2005, 18). I define agency as a practice in which a subject engages actively in any course of action; in the context of power relations that operates productively and, at the same time, involves coercion or domination. Accordingly, this conceptualization does not imply a liberal subject, free of coercion. Generally, the concept of human agency has been used in feminist scholarship, associated with the 'political and moral autonomy of the subject' (Mahmood 2005, 7). Specifically from a poststructuralist framework, the concept of autonomy has been criticized 'within a larger challenge posed to the illusory character of the rationalist, self authorizing, [and] transcendental subject' that Enlightenment and liberal thought presume (Mahmood 2005, 13). Nevertheless, it is 'harder to detach agency from that constellation of concepts around freedom, individualism, and choice' that are bound to those discourses of 'either/or, looser/chooser', which means 'that we are either the free agents of liberal fantasy or the oppressed victims of coercion' (Madhok, Phillips and Wilson 2013, 260). Those concepts presupposed a specific understanding of the self, a western one; and it is necessary to recognize that the 'conceptions of the "individual" or "person" are cross culturally as variable as the concept "woman" and "man" (Moore 1995, 39).

A situated notion of resistance and agency brings to the fore the 'complex ways in which agency and coercion are entwined, often in a non antithetical relationship' (Madhok, Phillips and Wilson 2013, 3). This means that agency and coercion occurs simultaneously; that is to say that 'agency is always exercised within constraints, that inequality is an ever present component, and that the constraints relate to social, not just personal, power relations' (Madhok, Phillips and Wilson 2013, 3-4). Agency and coercion 'cannot be understood in a binary relationship of presence/absence, where the one is present only by virtue of the other's absence' (Ibid). This is coherent with Foucault's rejection of 'dualistic thinking' as he did not frame the problem of agency in terms of 'free will/ determinism'; on the contrary, he thought of

'freedom as occurring inside, not outside, power relations' (McLaren 2002, 55). In consequence, resistance, as a specific kind of agency, occurs at the same time as domination.

Coherent with the idea that subjectivities are constructed historically, my approach to the concepts practices of resistance and agency is situated and context specific. This means that agency has different 'modalities' of operating (Mahmood 2005, 22), in complex and contradictory ways and in 'specific context dependent discursive moments' (Munro 1998, 21). Agency and resistance are matters of empirical research in the sense that need to be established if possible, under what conditions and restrictions, and with what meanings and consequences in each cultural setting.

A narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities

Language has a central place in poststructuralist thinking. It is considered neither neutral nor transparent in terms of meaning and the way it mediates our understanding of the world and ourselves. It is 'a means of finding out how meaning is acquired, how meanings change, how some meanings become normative and others muted and/or pathologised' (Ray 2001, 32). Binary categories organized in hierarchical opposition are embedded in language as for instance the man/woman binary (Davies 1997). In terms of subjectivities' constructions, the relevance of language lies in the way it is 'shaping both how we know and who we might become' (Hughes 2002a, 15). This is relevant for my research in terms of the possibilities to construct feminist subjectivities in a social order where dominant discourses and narratives are patriarchal.

The sense individuals have of themselves, others and the world around them is mediated by language. Therefore, language has a constitutive role in the way human beings make sense of the world and organize the meaning around oneself –our subjectivities–. Acknowledging the relevance of language in constituting social reality and subjectivities, I took a narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities. This means that analysing how someone tells a life, allows me to understand the process of becoming feminist. Through narrating a life, a woman constructs a subjectivity, making sense of her experiences, themselves, others and the world around them. This is linked to the idea that narratives are constitutive of human

experiences and social reality (Hyvärinen 2016; Elliot 2005; Plummer 2001, 1995). Therefore I argue that subjectivities, as an expression of human experience, are also narratively constituted. In that sense, narratives are part of my ontological and epistemological stance, which I use to undertake this research. Despite that, I am not using narratives as a method of analysis, in some ways my narrative approach to subjectivities could be closer to a 'synthesis' approach to narratives that 'works across the contradictions' and combines humanist traditions with poststructuralist ones (Andrew, Squire and Tamboukou 2013).

Particularly, when referring to the conception of the subject in narratives, there are several definitions which point to the relationality, positionality and fluidity. Stanley underlines Cavarero's definition of the 'narrative subject' in the preface of the book *Feminist Narratives Research* indicating 'a thinking, reflexively aware, and relationally formed self, although narrated as well as narrating' (Cavarero 2000 quoted by Stanley 2017). Elliot (2005), when explaining what is meant by a 'narrative constitution of identity', indicates that identity 'is grounded in experience and temporality and has coherence without being static and fixed' (Elliot 2005, 124). Somers (1994) states that 'through narrativity we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities' (1994, 606). In a similar line of thought, Lawler (2008) established that 'various forms of narrative become resources on which we can draw in constituting our own narrative identity', as stories contribute to identity formation (2008, 20-21). Notwithstanding, the former authors use of the concept of identity, they do not assume that it implies a unitary self. I prefer the concept of subjectivities, but I agree with them on the importance narratives have in the process of constructing a sense of self. This understanding is crucial for my work directed towards answering how feminist subjectivities are elaborated through narrating a life. What I am arguing here is that a narrative approach is productive to understand the process of subjectivity construction. It similarly offers the possibility to address resistance in the context of patriarchal dominant practices and discourses.

Another author that I have found useful regarding narrating lives is Plummer (2001, 1995), who stressed the role of stories and storytelling for individuals, communities and society. Although he departed from another theoretical

stance, critical humanism, he recognized the centrality of 'language and symbolic communication' for human beings (2001, 262) and conceptualized the subject, person or human being as embedded in time and space, dialogic and inter-subjective, contingent, embodied, with universal capacities, and a moral, ethical and political character (Plummer 2001, 262-264). I use his work especially in chapter five where I analyse how subjectivities are constructed in relation to the stories of significant women. This follows on from his idea that the stories 'significant others give may be amongst the most fundamental shapers of a life story' (Plummer 1995, 39); and that 'we consume stories in order to produce our own' (1995, 43) and vice versa. In addition, his work on sociology of stories in which he approaches stories in context and what stories do, is useful for all my data chapters. The same for his ideas about how 'stories and narratives depend upon communities that will create and hear those stories' operating as 'social worlds, interpretive communities, communities of memory', and how 'stories work their way into changing lives, communities and cultures' (Plummer 1995, 145).

My work refers to personal narratives, which are stories told about one's self, who you are in the context of a society. It is a story in which someone established connections between the self and the surrounding worlds, a story that connects the self to the social, 'history and biography and the relations between the two within society' (Mills 2000, 6). In poststructuralism, narratives are 'always multiple, socially constructed and constructing, reinterpreted and reinterpretable' (Andrew, Squire and Tamboukou 2013, 5). My interest in a narrative approach to subjectivities is related to 'the relational view of self' that coexist with a 'relational perspective on narrative, emphasising the dialogical aspect of research encounters and the co-constitutive character of their products as well as processes.' (Stanley 2017, ix). Specifically referring to feminist narrative research, Stanley asserts that 'wider matters of context are recognised with regard to the interpolations of personal and master or dominant narratives, and their subjects are positioned as neither victims nor heroines but as agentic within constraints that are given close analytical attention.' (2017, xiv).

I have not yet distinguished between narratives and stories. Some authors use the terms interchangeably. I make a difference following Hemmings (2011), who distinguishes between stories and narratives in her analysis of feminist theory. She uses the concept of stories to refer to the 'overall tales'

that western feminists tell and that constitute “myth or common opinions’. By narratives, she refers to the ‘textual refrains (content and pattern) used to tell these stories and their movement across time and space’ (Hemmings 2011, 227). My own elaboration for this work is that stories are actually what my participants told me; and the narratives refer to the patterns, repeated contents and meanings elaborated by my participants when telling their lives. I will mainly use the concept ‘narratives’, as I am stressing the specific ways and common threads these narratives have in the case of feminist schoolteachers. The connections between subjectivities and narratives are explored all through my data chapters. Specifically, in chapter four where narratives and subjectivities are connected in order to construct feminist subjectivities; and in chapter five where subjectivities are constructed in relation to significant women and their stories of women’s struggles with patriarchy. In the last data chapter (six), I analyse how feminist subjectivities are constructed in the pedagogical and activist arena through micro-resistance in neoliberal times.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the pertinent literature in my research area regarding feminist schoolteachers’ lives, identities and subjectivities. I also discussed the feminist poststructuralist framework I use to develop my data chapters four, five and six. This framework allows me to explore and answer my research question about how feminist subjectivities are constructed in the case of English female schoolteachers from different generations in a neoliberal era. Having acknowledged that there is research showing how women’s agency is exercised, and subjectivities and identities are constructed in current times, I have also highlighted the relative absence of feminist schoolteachers as subjects of research in general and in England specifically. I have likewise identified that narrative approaches, despite being widespread in social science, have not been used very much to work on feminist schoolteachers’ subjectivities. Moreover, research previously done has focussed on the discourses that produce certain subjectivities or how subjectification is operating to reproduce patriarchal discourses and practices. Some research has been done using feminist poststructuralist frameworks, especially working on discourse and technologies of the self.

In terms of my theoretical framework, I use feminist poststructuralism because it provides useful tools that allow me to unpack the processes involved in the formation of feminist subjectivities. Feminist poststructuralism is relevant because non binary ways of thinking position the subject in the context of structural constraints, but at the same time recognize the capacity of agency and resistance. This is central for any feminist research project, which not only wants to understand women's lives but also aims to change oppressive realities. Moreover, the critical approach of feminist poststructuralism to the conceptualization of the unitary subject allows exploration of how a feminist subjectivity is constructed. This is in terms of how resistance to patriarchy is exercised, and how the subjectivities of feminist teachers are contingent, situated and constrained by historical and biographical circumstances.

I have used a narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities, which means starting from the acknowledgment that narratives are constitutive of human lives; therefore is an ontological and epistemological starting point for my research. By narrating the story of their lives, my participants constructed feminist subjectivities in relation to the world as analysed in chapter four. They also explored their subjectivities as constructed in relation to others, particularly significant woman which are examined in chapter five. Furthermore, chapter six explores the creation of subjectivity in relation to what they think-do in their neoliberal times as teachers and activists.

This theoretical approach allows me to explore how my participants construct and re-construct their feminist subjectivities through living their lives. It also enables me to stress how subjectivities are constructed relationally, showing the connections or 'hyphens' between self and others (Fine 1994), history and biography, agency as well as structure, oppression and resistance, and thinking and doing. All these dimensions are interwoven in the endless process of giving meaning to women's experiences in order to construct feminist subjectivities. In summary, drawing from a feminist, poststructuralist framework, I use the concept of subjectivities to stress a sense of self that is based on experiences as lived through life and permanently constructed socially and relationally. Furthermore, I use a narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities as narrating lives is constitutive of human beings and social life.

In the next chapter, I proceed to discuss the methodology of the research, including my ontological, epistemological and methodological stances, accordingly with my feminist, poststructuralist standpoint. In that section, I describe the means of decision making surrounding the selection of the research design, the fieldwork and the analytical processes.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter deals with the processes of knowledge production of my research including ontological, epistemological and methodological issues. Each step, decision and methodological choice are explained and described based on my field notes and reconstruction of the research process. Moreover, all the assumptions concerning how the research was planned and done, as well as where I stand as a researcher are explicitly brought to the fore. The chapter contains the description of the methods used, mainly referring to what I have called 'adapted' life story interview. It also covers the ethical aspects, the research process and fieldwork, issues of reflexivity as the researcher, and the general characterization of the participants. I finish the chapter with a section about the beneficial use of adapted life story interviews. I have also provided a general information schedule and a group interview with visual timelines that I present later on in the chapter. All these processes draw on my research questions presented in the introduction and a feminist framework which feeds from different theoretical stances such as feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory.

But before presenting all of this, it seems important for me to express one of the strongest feelings I had during my research that tells much about me as a researcher, my participants and the topic of the research. One of the most enthusiastic moments of my research was when I was doing the interviews. I look back and think how much I enjoyed the experience and what a privilege it was to have access to my participants' stories. I really felt happy and passionate about what I was doing, inquiring about the lives of women who challenge patriarchy in everyday practices and hearing their wonderful stories that resonate and inspired me. Interestingly, this feeling of enthusiasm coincides with the experience of some of the women I interviewed. As one of the teacher's email stated after the second interview, the experience was real pleasure,

Just to say how much I enjoyed meeting with you and telling you so much about my life, feminism and my time as a teacher for your research. Thank you for this opportunity to talk so much about myself, and my passion for being a feminist. I didn't know it would be so enjoyable! (Gabriela, in her 60s, postwar generation).

This quote tells not only the satisfaction she felt about being able to tell her story but also says something about the interview situation and the kind of interview that was conducted. What I want to highlight here is the social space that the qualitative interview creates in terms of telling a life story, being heard and recognized and sharing experiences between women. This does not mean that I am idealizing the fieldwork and the interview situation. Not every interviewee is the same and the fieldwork process is full of other feelings and anxieties. But the experience of telling a life in an interview situation allows several issues that are relevant in terms of subjectivity construction, as developed in the final section of this chapter.

Feminist research approach

My research is informed by a feminist stance, which is, as feminists and feminisms itself, a compound of multiple ideas and varied frameworks, according to 'feminism's unruly tendencies' (Hughes 2013, 10). My research is feminist in the sense that it draws on feminist frameworks/ theories, and is shaped by feminist politics and ethics (Acker 1994, 55, Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, 16; Stanley 2013b, 15). My position as a researcher is not neutral, as it is committed to feminist politics. Hence the knowledge that is produced aims to contribute to an understanding and promotion of changes in gender relations; that is to say it is a 'knowledge for' not only a 'knowledge what' (Stanley 2013b). Accordingly, feminism in a broad sense '...implies a case for emancipation' based on the idea that 'gender relations are unjust/oppressive, and people are able to choose to change them' by getting involved in actions 'of resistance, agency and emancipation' (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, 7). This is a departure point of my research which implies a feminist ontology, 'a way of being in the world', which,

...comes into existence, not in relation to something essentially female, but rather the facts of the present social construction of 'women' as this is seen, understood and acted upon by those who call themselves feminist; and who name this present social

construction of women as oppressive. That is, it is the experience of and acting against perceived oppression that gives rise to a distinctive feminist ontology; and it is the analytic exploration of the parameters of this in the research process that gives rise to a distinctive feminist epistemology (Stanley 2013b, 14).

Consequently my research is based on a feminist ontology and epistemology. Although, it must be acknowledged that there are different feminist epistemological positions such as 'standpoint, postmodernism, empiricism and new materialism', and many authors that cannot be classified in this 'fixed prototypical ways' (Hughes 2013, 10). As stated at the start of the chapter, my own stance is a mixture mainly of feminist poststructuralism and standpoint theory, and faced the challenges and tensions inherent in the search of non-binary ways of thinking and retaining the focus on women, as many feminists have addressed (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002; Hughes 2013; Fraser and Nicholson 1988).

Feminist standpoint theory and the concept of the 'situated knower' point to 'knowledge arising out of the perspectives that come through the social location of the knower'; where subjectivities and experiences have consequences in the process of knowing and for the knower; and where 'objectivity' has been challenged as it 'excluded, misrepresented, marginalised and ignored the experiences of women' (Hughes 2013, 10). For my research these issues are important, as my interest lies in bringing to the front the experiences of women and how they construct a feminist subjectivity through negotiating and struggling with knowledges available and searching for feminist ways of knowing. It is also relevant as it emphasized the 'specific and partial social location' from which the feminist researcher departs, making power relations visible between researchers and participants (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, 65). Nevertheless, feminist standpoint theory has been criticised as being essentialist and assuming one universal view of womanhood, which is no longer tenable (Hughes 2013; Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002).

Poststructuralism (as a variant of postmodernism) has participated in forming those critiques opposing any essentialism, unitary categories and the 'access to a single, objective form of reality' (Letherby 2003, 51). As Fraser and Nicholson stated 'the categories of postmodern feminist theory' need to 'be inflected by temporality, with historically specific institutional categories' or categories 'framed by a historical narrative and rendered temporally and

culturally specific' (Fraser and Nicholson 1988, 101). However, as these authors also affirm, 'postmodern feminists need not abandon the large theoretical tools needed to address large political problems' (Ibid). Particularly for my research, the important aspects of feminist poststructuralist theories relate to what Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002, 83-103) call the freedom from binary thinking, the freedom from essential identities and the concept of power as productive, issues I have developed in chapter one.

The concept of situated knower characteristic of standpoint theory has been used also in 'postmodernist thought and feminist empiricism' (Hughes 2013, 10). In that sense, my epistemological combination of feminist standpoint and feminist poststructuralism is not the first attempt to link both positions. In this research, I have a practical approach using the tools from each epistemology that were helpful for my research purposes. This epistemological choice has not been a straightforward path, as there are some incommensurabilities between both positions. It created tensions, difficulties and challenges through which I have worked along the research process, analysis and writing. For instance, my research highlights the experiences and narrative constructions of a group of feminists, but I do not claim for their narratives or my results a universal validity or 'absolute truth'; nor do I assume a 'relativist position of "an absolute difference"' (Hughes 2013, 10). Knowledge claims of standpoint feminisms 'do not rest solely on experiential claims'; they are achieved through struggles (Harstock 1983 cited in Hughes 2013, 11) and 'requir[e] reflexivity and dialogue' (op.cit.). As argued by Walby, they also require 'argumentation and communication' (2000 cited in Hughes 2013, 18). Therefore, what I claim is the possibility to build up feminist knowledge based on the particular experiences of specific women. This knowledge is located socially and historically, socially constructed, and also contingent and partial, but still could resonate for other women and feminists and be subject to deliberation.

More specifically, I acknowledge and explicitly state that the narratives presented here are partial and located accounts in time and space; contingent and socially constructed. The partiality is related to the knowledge I produce as researcher and to the participants' accounts; both moulded by my own experiences, the conditions of production of the life stories, the experiences of my participants and the discourses available to construct their

stories and my research account (see, in this chapter, section on research process and fieldwork). I am not claiming an absolute truth about their lives or that my research is truly representing their voices. The narratives are social constructions in which my participants are self constructed and socially constructed through dominant discourses and, at the same time, co-constructed in the context of the research (see chapter one, subjectivities and narratives). Furthermore, the ways in which my participants' feminist subjectivities have been constructed are also contingent, not only because they are situated in specific historical time and space, with different temporalities involved (see introduction), but also because of the fact that complexity and multiplicity are part of subjectivities as conceptualized under a feminist poststructuralist approach.

My ontological and epistemological stance has methodological consequences. It means that I am implicated in the production of knowledge; my feminist stance, worldview and positioning permeates all the process as is discussed later in the section 'I, the researcher'. In addition, my research aims to understand and analyze the complexities and multiplicities of ways in which feminist subjectivities are constructed in a specific time/space frame (the postwar and neoliberal era), for some specific subjects (western, female, cisgender, English schoolteachers), who are described later on in this chapter. This is not a universal knowledge, despite the possibility that it can be extrapolated for similar subjects in other contexts. Furthermore, I want to address what 'women do and do not have in common' (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, 103), which means to explore differences and commonalities without searching for one way of constructing a feminist subjectivity. Accordingly, my research aims to produce 'feminist knowledge' (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002, 5) that is 'temporally and culturally specific' (Fraser and Nicholson 1988, 101).

Methods of data collection

My research design and research methods are qualitative. This means in general that the processes involved are 'inductive', which means that theory is generated from the research; it is 'interpretivist', signifying that the emphasis is on understanding rather than explaining; and 'constructionist' referring to an ontological position that implies 'social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena

“out there” and separate from those involved in its constructions’ (Bryman 2016, 375).

I proceed in a three stage process of data collection. In the first one I conducted fifteen ‘adapted life stories’ (explained later on) with an information form for each of the participants. The life story was a qualitative, in depth, semi structured interview. The second stage was a second round of interviews done with a subsample, five participants, as part of the life story, to develop in depth some topics raised in the first interview. This took the form of a semi structured, in depth, thematic interview. The stories of these five participants are referred to as ‘core narratives’, all of them done with two session interviews. In the third stage I did a group interview with new participants in which they constructed a visual timeline and discussed the interview extracts from the neoliberal generation teachers.

Initially, the decision concerning which specific qualitative research method to use was not clear. I knew that my interest was women’s stories. When thinking about my choices, Sasha Roseneil and a narrative she presented in the Annual Lecture at the Institute of Advance Studies of The University of Warwick in 2013 inspired me. She used biographical narrative and life story methods (Roseneil 2012) to tell a very moving story of a woman and her experiences of intimate citizenship. From then onward, I began to explore narrative methods and life stories. After methodological and practical considerations I ended using an ‘adapted’ version of life stories and biographical narratives. This means I used a semi structured interview and a relatively shorter version of life story in contrast to biographical narrative or biographical narrative interpretative methods (BNIM, Wengraf 2001), which are based on only one question and three interview sessions (Roseneil 2012). This decision was mainly pragmatic related to the schoolteachers’ restricted time availability. Therefore, I did what I called an ‘adapted life story interview’, with a thematic focus on becoming feminist, and a narrative emphasis in the sense I drew attention to how subjectivities are constructed in the process of narrating a whole life. This decision is also coherent with my narrative approach to the construction of subjectivities, developed already in the framework (chapter one). This mean, considering narratives as constitutive of social realities and subjectivities, thus the telling of a life became important.

Figure 1 Overview of the methods used and participants involved by generation

Fieldwork phase	Method		Postwar generation	N	Neoliberal generation	N	Total
First	1. Adapted life story interview	a) First round interview	Soledad, Violeta, Victoria, Rosemund, Juana, Fatima, Gabriela, Bridget, Esperanza, Andrea	10	Ana, Luisa, Rosa, Cyndi, Virginia	5	15
Second		b) Second round interview	Gabriela, Bridget, Esperanza, Andrea	4	Virginia	1	5
First	2. General information schedule		all	10	all	5	15
Second	3. Visual biographical timeline		Gabriela, Bridget, Esperanza, Andrea	4	Virginia	1	5
Third	4. Group interview and visual historical			0	other young women	3	3

Legend:	Core narratives
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Adapted life story interviews

My interest in using life stories lies within the search for understanding in the context of a whole life and through the process of telling a life. Therefore, in addition to the theoretical issues of a narrative approach to subjectivity construction explained in the framework (chapter one), there is a narrative element in the interview. In chapter one, I also developed my distinction between stories and narratives, stressing that stories are what the participants told me, and the narratives are the patterns, repeated contents and meanings in those stories regarding the construction of feminist subjectivities. Expressly regarding life stories, I am using an inclusive definition that stresses the personal element, the construction of it and their partiality as it follows,

...the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (Atkinson 1998, 8).

There are many different kinds of life story interviews and approaches (Plummer 2001). My choice could be classified as part of 'short life stories', in the sense that it took less time (between one and two hours each interview) to gather the information and was less detailed of the totality of a life in comparison with 'long life stories', generally longer and centred only on one person. As Plummer (2001) states, this short style of life story interview has 'more focus' and is gathered through in depth interviews, with open ended questions' in contrast to 'long life stories' (2001, 20-25). It is also 'topical' in the sense it 'confronts a particular issue' (Plummer 2001, 26), which in this research is the construction of feminist subjectivities; and it is part of 'researched and solicited stories' because it is done in the context of research where individuals are prompted to tell their stories through an interview situation (2001, 28).

Life stories can be gathered by different methods as explained before, being the most common through in depth interviews. They also can be done using biographical narratives (Roseneil 2012), sometimes called biographical narrative interpretative methods (Wengraf 2001). I used in depth interviews, which allows information to be accrued about what is not self evident, the 'depth realities' involving knowledge inducted about 'discourses, objective referents and subjectivities' (Wengraf 2001, 5-6). Life stories could be done in one or several sessions. In this research, I did life stories in one session with ten participants (first round interviews) and two sessions with five participants (second round interviews). Both rounds of interviews were qualitative, in depth and semi structured. The second round interviews can be also labelled as thematic interviews in the sense that the focus was on topics mentioned in the first round interview and developed in the second round more profoundly.

For the first round interviews, I designed an interview schedule or interview guide (see Appendix N.1). I developed an operational matrix (see Appendix N.2) on which I placed my research questions, the dimensions that were part of them and the interview questions. The main topics/dimension were, motivation to be a teacher; how they became involved in gender/feminist

issues including awareness of gender differences and discriminations; involvement in gender/feminist activism; issues about gender and pedagogical work; influential persons and moments in their ways of thinking and being; support to fulfill their worldview and feminist project; meaning in the current context of being a teacher who challenges gender inequalities. These topics were situated considering different moments in their life course, including childhood, family of origin, educational trajectory, work trajectory and current times. The interview schedule was tested in an initial phase of the research with two pilot participants and adjusted to focus on the whole lifetime, with an emphasis on gendered experiences and their practice of feminism through pedagogy and activism. Later on, when applied to the first two participants, I made some minor adjustments. The interview guide has four open ended questions, which I have asked every interviewee. It begins with an introductory question, that also functioned as a 'breaking the ice question' and less intrusive question. But the sequence of the other general questions were in many cases changed according to how the interviewee was telling her story. I always ended with two closing questions dealing with anything my participants wanted to add or if they wanted to ask me something or had any doubts (see Appendix 1: First round interview schedule).

The second round interviews were, as said, in depth thematic interviews. For these ones I designed an interview schedule, but each one was different as it was based on the first interview conducted with each participant. The purpose was to go in depth on topics mentioned in the first interview, which were relevant in becoming feminist, for instance reading and the meaning and impact of those readings. In some cases the purpose was to cover topics not developed in the first interview in order to have similar thematic material in each case. For example, if the topic of family of origin (regarding, for instance, gender division of labour, gender stereotypes, gender relations in the family) was not developed in the first interview, I put that topic as central for the second interview. I included an initial question that was the same for all participants related to the research method. This means, asking about how they felt in the interview and what they experienced throughout the interview and subsequently. This material is the one I have used to reflect on the kind of interview conducted and its potential, as developed later in this chapter.

General information schedule form

I have used a schedule to gather basic data on my participants (see Appendix 3, General information schedule). This is a structured self filled form with sociodemographic information about the interviewees. In general, I sent this form by email before the first interview, together with the informed consent form, so every participant could complete it before or at least have seen it prior to the interview. Some of the participants filled in the forms before the interview and even sent it to me by email before the interview. Other participants filled in the form after the interview. All the information gathered through this form was put in a database in Excel that allowed generation of a general characterization of the participants.

Visual timelines and group interview

Timelines are diagrams where significant events and milestones are situated in a chronological order regarding the individuals' lives, organized from when they were born onwards (Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012). In this research I have used Visual Timelines in a mixed way, not only as tools to gather data, but also as an analytical tool post interviews. This was a way to organize my data and approach the analysis. After the interviews I constructed five biographical timelines for my 'core narratives', which are presented in chapter four and five. Only in one case (Virginia), the biographical timeline was done in conjunction with the interviewee after the first interview, because she was the last interviewee and at that point in the research I was constructing the other biographical timelines. That is why in this context I refer to visual timelines as an analytical tool. The timelines had been useful to have a visual overview of my participants' lives and the meaningful events and encounters influential for their construction of feminist subjectivities. Later on, I also created a historical timeline in order to have an overview of the wider context in which the narratives of my participants were situated which is presented in chapter three on context.

In parallel, I also conducted a group interview where I used a visual timeline as a tool to gather data about the women growing up during the neoliberal era and their experiences, and also to discuss data from the neoliberal generation of teachers. I did this in order to validate my data and gather more information about the neoliberal era in England and neoliberal generation

teachers. As an international student I was not aware of cultural and historical features of English society, nor had any background about the educational system. This interview also provided information about those issues. The group interview was conducted with three young women living in England (new participants). It was done the 8th of December 2015, when the majority of my data was already collected (I only incorporated one new participant after) and I was already analysing my data. In the first part of the group interview, the participants elaborated on a collective timeline from the 1980s onward situating historical and biographical events relevant to their lives and subjectivities. This information had been used in chapter three. Then, in the second half of the interview, they commented on extracts from the neoliberal generation teachers' interviews, indicating to what extent they resonated with their own lives. Summing up, the way I have used visual timelines is an adaptation of current uses of it as part of visual methods research; visual timelines are generally used to elicit information before semi structured or follow up interviews (Kolar et al. 2017, Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012).

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are part of the whole research process; they 'must inform information gathering, analysis and writing' to assure that research findings 'will not harm informants' (Parpart 2010, 25). Therefore at different moments I have reflected and took measures regarding how I handle information, analyse and write about my findings. My research follows international ethical standards concerning research protocols and also those established by the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2004). First, pertinent information had been supplied to participants, such as the purpose of the research, the exclusive use of the results for research goals, their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw whenever they want, the anonymity and confidentiality of all information provided, and the access to the transcriptions if they were required. All these pieces of information were included in the 'Informed consent form' which were sent by email before the interview to every participant and was signed at the beginning of each interview (see Appendix 4: Informed consent). Additionally, I took all the necessary measures to assure the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees, using pseudonyms for them, deleting all personal references to names, people and places and omitting personal information that was not directly related with my research topic. I have been very careful in handling the audios and later

the transcriptions. Due to not being a native English speaker, I sought help with the transcriptions. However, in doing so I was careful to ensure the transcriber's confidential use of information and the deletion of all files and emails after the work was done. I constructed a database, a separate file, for the personal identification detail that only I handled. Any other material with information was always handled using the pseudonyms.

In relation to the aforementioned issues and ethical dilemmas faced during the interviews, I had concerns regarding how much information to disclose and how to handle difficult situations. This was especially the case regarding delicate topics as addictions, mental health issues and traumatic experiences that arise in the interview related to themselves or other persons. My attitude was to hear and give space when emotions arose and wait to continue with the interview. I have only one case in which the person cried in the interview. Generally those issues were not directly related to my research topic so they have been omitted. On the other hand, I also faced ethical concerns regarding how much information I disclose about my research interest, my personal life and myself. I always introduced myself at the beginning with who I am and what I was doing as well as where I came from. Regarding more personal issues, I evaluated in each situation how much to tell, but in general I was very open as most of the interviews were conducted in a very honest tone. However, if they asked personal opinions of me, I tried to leave them to the end of the interview. Many of the interviews finished as a conversation. Later on when analysing the data and writing about it, where ethical concerns were present, I changed, masked or omitted some information regarding names, places and facts that did not affect the rationale of the research.

The research process and fieldwork

The research conducted had three fieldwork phases, which in total cover a seventeen month period. The first round of interviews was conducted between October 2013 and November 2014 (13 months); the second round interviews was between February 2015 and April 2015 (3 months); and the group interview and one extra interview was in December 2015. The research was conducted across England with teachers from the north (6), the Midlands (2), the south (5) and teachers from London (2) (see Figure 3

and 4, characterization of the participants). Before the beginning of the fieldwork, between January and February 2013, I did two pilot interviews where I tested my interview schedule and where I first approached to the topics in the interviews. After the pilot interviews, I adjusted the interview schedule in order to begin the fieldwork.

Access, sampling strategies and criteria for the selection of the participants

As an international student, coming from overseas, the process of generating contacts and networks to find the participants I was looking for was a long, difficult and slow process. I did not have any networks in the UK before coming here. I was simultaneously learning about the UK educational system as well as trying to access feminist or gender aware schoolteachers. This process has required much effort and time. This process began in April 2013. It involved a wide search of institutions, organizations, contacts, talking and writing to many institutions and diverse people mainly from teachers' networks and feminist networks all around England. I emailed different institutions and organizations with a short paragraph invitation. Some of the institutions I contacted were teachers' unions (NUT and NASUWT), special interest groups and networks (BSA Sociology Teaching Group, British Educational Association and Gender Interest Group), feminist networks and organizations (Gender and Education Association, Fawcett Bristol Network, Coventry Women's Voices, Feminist Women Studies Association, Oxfam, UK Feminista, amongst others) and a network of schools connected to the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the Centre for Education Studies at Warwick University. I also posted a short invitation paragraph to participate in the research on different organizations' websites. In addition, an invitation letter was published in the National Union of Teacher's Magazine that reaches all their members. The invitation for participants was made in a very open way, which asked for 'schoolteachers committed to challenge gender inequalities', without specifying whether it was aimed at women or men. In general, it was not easy to find the participants, not only because of the specific profile I was looking for (committed to gender equality and or feminist), but also because schoolteachers in general have very demanding agendas, female teachers in particular. Moreover, as one teacher said, Rosemund, under the 'current context of austerity' in England they have 'less staff to make the same work', which resulted in the refusal of a second interview. A similar situation

occurred with Juana, who was a mother of two children and rejected a second interview.

The ways of selecting the participants were a mixture of access strategies or what Bryman calls 'kind of sampling', mainly 'purposive sampling' and 'voluntary sample'. A 'generic purposive sample' is done guided by the research questions (Bryman 2016, 409), which helps to select the participants. In this research, I contacted people through teachers and feminist networks accordingly to my purpose of finding feminist teachers. In addition, all of them are also part of a voluntary sample as they were 'self selected' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2010, 170) after seeing or receiving an invitation. A few participants (4) were found by snowball strategies, which means 'building up a sample through informants' (op.cit). Most of my participants contacted me through one union's network (7) and less through feminist networks (4).

The final criteria used for the selection of the participants for the first round interviews were the following,

- Female schoolteachers committed to challenge gender inequalities and/or engaged in any kind of gender/ feminist activism. This way of phrasing is related to my inclusive definition of feminism that not only includes self identified feminist teachers, but also those who work towards gender equality and women's rights. I defined this profile because of my interest in the experiences, worldviews and voices of this specific group, underrepresented in contemporary research.
- Schoolteachers with a working experience of at least 5 years, in order to have participants who accumulated relevant know how that allowed them to settle in the profession.
- Currently working or retired teachers.

These criteria are the final result of the process of searching for participants, which means I have made some adjustments during the fieldwork. One encountered issue was that some of the teachers who were willing to talk to me were retired and therefore they had less time restrictions in comparison to teachers who were working. Moreover, I realized they have a 'life to tell' and this was an interesting input because of my interest in their whole lives. Consequently, I took the decision to include them during the fieldwork. In addition, the initial idea of the research was to include female and male

schoolteachers. Therefore, my pilot interviews included a woman and a man. However, as the research unfolded few male teachers were interested in participating, and finally I had three men interviewed. One who had worked with schools but was not a teacher and two others that were not feminist, according to my inclusive definition of feminism (explained in the Introduction of the thesis, which included the idea of challenging gender inequality). Accordingly, when I finished the fieldwork I decided to leave out the data input of the three men's interviews that informed this thesis. I also left out two women, who were not feminist according to my inclusive definition.

The selection criteria for the second round interviews (subsample) were that these teachers,

- Represented a variety of patterns in terms of becoming feminist and teachers,
- Were very thoughtful in their interviews,
- Provided rich data/topics that could be deepened,
- The availability of time required for another session of one or two hours.

The conditions of production of the interviews and interview situations

Before and after the interviews, I ensured I had extra time as I generally needed to travel to the locations where the interviews were to be conducted. That additional time allowed me to have a quiet space before and after each interview to check, reflect, and take notes. It included checking logistic issues, revising the interview schedule, consulting the basic information from the teachers I had and taking notes of my theoretical, methodological and analytical thoughts. In general I met the interviewees in the city they worked or lived, or we agreed an intermediate point in between (some city). Most of the contacts were done by email, but I also had telephone communication. The venue of the interviews were mostly coffee shops, a few cases took place in the participants' homes and a few in an office or meeting room. I asked my respondents to search for a quiet space to do the interview, therefore generally the places were quiet coffee shops where the interviews could be conducted without disturbances, as for instance in the foyer of a theatre hall. I had two interviews where the space was not comfortable for the interview, as they were small cafes too crowded or noisy. The core

narratives, as I have called the five cases with a second round interview, were all conducted in adequate places with one exception.

Each interview session began with an introduction of the research and an outline of the confidentiality issues. I introduced myself as a PhD researcher from Warwick University, Chilean, interested in the lives of women teachers fighting for gender equality in schools and outside them. Then I requested their approval to record the interview and they signed the informed consent, if they had not done it before by email. Every interview was recorded with the agreement of the woman interviewed. I used my interview guide in every interview, asking all the questions to each interviewee. Generally, I began with the first question to break the ice. Nevertheless, the way I conducted the interviews allowed a considerable range of flexibility, which is a main characteristic of qualitative interview (Bryman 2016). Many times the order of the questions changed, and in some cases we began with a conversation and then turned to follow the guide. Furthermore, I did a number of 'follow up questions' and developed reinforcement during the interview situation as recommended by Wengraf (2001). Sometimes I felt that the interviewees did not directly answer my questions, which I reiterated when their answer seemed to go elsewhere. Later on I realized that the women interviewed were telling 'their story', not the story I wanted to hear.

The tone and emotional climate of the interviews were in general relaxed and pleasant. Some of the interviews were like a conversation, as some of the interviewees expressed 'it felt like a chat' (Esperanza). Others had a more professional tone, but nevertheless they were equally good interviews. My participants used expressions such as 'enjoyment', 'pleasant' and 'nice' to describe the interview situation. In some interview situations we built up a very intimate climate, as one of them expressed she felt like she was in a 'therapeutic session' (Juana) with a positive connotation, or another said that it was done 'in such a personal way' (Andrea). This is something recognized as part of the potential of life story interviews (Atkinson 2002). Sometimes, the beginnings of the interviews were less fluid and a bit tense, but as the conversation developed the participant and I became more relaxed. Some participants were less communicative and required more effort on my part, especially with some that did not easily disclose their feelings and reflections. In one of the second round interviews one of my participants expressed she felt anxious when she saw the transcription of the first interview. She said, 'I

worried afterwards that I had exposed myself too much. [...] It is quite hard talking about yourself.' She also emphasises that 'It's quite exposing to delve that deep into your own motivation' (Andrea). She is one of the teachers that have a very public role, therefore she possibly worried that if someone identified her she would feel vulnerable. In that sense she felt less comfortable, but I reassured her of the anonymity and confidentiality in the way the information would be treated. Despite that, she was willing to collaborate for the second interview. To sum up, I consider that the rapport in all interviews was adequate, some better than others, but they all served the purpose of the interview.

The interpersonal relationship built on the interviewees varied. With some of them, it was a professional relationship, with others a friendly relationship and with some we ended building a friendship, especially after a second interview. For instance, we have exchanged emails, book references and presents, and have talked more than is strictly necessary for the research purposes. Meeting in their houses and sharing tea and sandwiches made a difference in the form of relationship established as well. After each interview I sent emails to all of them to say 'thank you'. In addition, I tried to keep them informed about my research and share some content that could be of their interest. I maintained email contact with almost all of them for one year, therefore I have some email data that adds to the depth of the data collected in the interviews. With some of them, I still maintain some contact. In the case of the second interviews, I brought to all of them chocolates and a postcard as a small gesture of gratitude for their help and time. Therefore the relationship with my research participants involves a mix of roles that go from 'stranger role', passing through the 'acquaintance role' to a kind of 'friendship role' (Plummer 2001, 209-210).

As part of the fieldwork process, some participants shared with me extra materials around the time of the interviews. Generally, it was contextual information in terms of my research purposes. For instance, published material about challenging gender stereotypes at schools; or a research project one of the teacher did in a course about gender issues, or news regarding gender issues that one posted to me. Some of the extra information related to my research topic was provided via email contact that we maintained for a while. This information was then used as part of the data

for the present work. This information illustrates the participants' high degree of engagement and their willingness to collaborate.

The fieldwork and interview situation, as any research process, was highly energy consuming in terms of the requirements, being focused on the things that I wanted to ask, trying to understand as much as possible (English being my second language), leaving them to speak and not interrupt the flow of the story they were telling me, forming the right follow up questions to go deeper into the topics they were developing, and trying to cover all the important aspects for my research. I finished all the interviews exhausted, but at the same time very enthusiastic for the richness of the data and the amazing experiences of my interviewees. The logistic arrangements to conduct the interviews in different cities were also time consuming and challenging, as it is doing fieldwork in a foreign country and language.

Register, self debriefing, transcripts and data analysis

All interviews (both first and second rounds) were digitally recorded and stored in an audio file with backups of the information. I have gathered rich life story data, mostly in one session with a length of one to two hours each. After each interview, I did a 'self debriefing session' of the interviews, following Wengraf's methodology (2001), where I captured all the thoughts and insights I had from the interview, related with any additional content, impressions and ideas. Some debriefing sessions were made straight away after the interview, by writing or digital recording, but others were done later in the same day or the day after. All the debriefing was done in Spanish and English and I transcribed them and coded them afterwards. These materials have been very useful especially for this methodology chapter and first initial approaches to the data.

Later, a native English speaker undertook the work of fully transcribing the interviews. Afterwards, I checked all the transcription against the audio record and corrected any details. I heard and read all the transcription to begin to code them and at the same time I did 'theoretical memos' (Wengraf 2001; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Theoretical memos are used in grounded theory work as 'the theorizing write up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding' (Glaser 1978, 83 cited by Thornberg and Charmaz 2011, 54). These memos were useful in order to

construct my codes, provide insight on how to proceed with the analysis and to connect my data with theory. In the cases of the five second round interviews, I sent the transcriptions back to the interviewees by email. The idea was that they could check them, respond to some doubts and small queries. Nevertheless, only two cases answered back (retired teachers, Gabriela and Bridget). Accordingly, as this was not very productive, I stopped doing it for the rest of the participants. In addition, only one participant asked for the transcription. Then, it followed successive phases of reading of the interviews, first identifying general topics and then initial possible coding (10). After that I coded all the material in five thematic codes: significant others, imagined sisterhood, pedagogy, activism and discrimination. I also did a reading of the first interviews for the core narratives (five) in order to identify questions for the second round interviews.

My analytical framework is based on a thematic analysis with a narrative approach. This means a narrative understanding of lives and subjectivities, an issue developed in the theoretical framework in chapter one. This pointed to the narrative formation of subjectivities as situated in time, constructed and represented through a story. The way I made sense of these lived experiences told in the stories was organising them around experienced events and encounters. I did this bearing in mind the connections of events and encounters with the construction of feminist subjectivities at different points in the lives of my participants. The focus of the analysis has been in the contents and meanings attached to experiences. I searched for links between past and present experiences; and also between personal, professional and political experiences. Particularly, the analysis of the data which took different forms in each data chapters (four, five and six). For chapter four, I have focused on three of my participants, who are part of my core narratives, each as a whole unit. I carried out a thematic analysis with a narrative approach focused on the events in the context of time and the connections with subjectivity construction. This means I worked with three life stories each based on two interview sessions. For chapter five, I again carried out a thematic analysis with a narrative approach but I only used it for the first section of the chapter relating to two different participants' core narratives as a whole to analyse encounters with significant women through interpersonal relationships. For the second part, I used the five core narratives to work thematically on encounters with significant women found through reading, what I have called 'imagined sisterhood'. For chapter six, I

worked with all the life stories (fifth teen) carrying out a thematic analysis. The rationale for the selection of the participant in each section is explained at the beginning of the chapters.

'I the researcher', reflexivity and positionality

The research practice and the interview situation are 'located sociohistorical' practices (Wengraf 2001, 50), as any social phenomena. There the interviewee and researcher are socially positioned, with particular cultural and historical backgrounds. *I the researcher*, paraphrasing Stanley (1992) in '*The auto/biographical I*', have a particular biography, background and a set of characteristics that I brought into the research, including my social positioning. This is what Ribbens and Edwards (1998, 14) called 'bringing in the personal' to the research. In other words, 'researchers are part of, not apart from, the social encounters and processes that comprise research; and this brings back with it the need for researcher reflexivity, including "thinking back" and "thinking hard" about un/comfortable things' (Stanley 2013a, 5). Consequently, I explicitly go through my own story and biography in order to explain how I am implicated in the research, issues particularly important from a feminist standpoint approach. Taking into account also that 'people who write are always writing about their lives' (Richardson 2001, 34) and that life stories specifically are 'co-constructed' as process and product (Stanley 2017 in Woodiwiss, Smith and Lockwood 2017). The interviewee and researcher are 'collaborators, composing, constructing a story the teller can be pleased with' (Atkinson 1998, 9). In that sense, I also acknowledge the partiality of my account and the limitations of the research as any socially located research.

As a researcher I have a social position. Hence I have differences, I also have similarities with my participants. I am an international student, white, middle class woman in her late 40s, from the global south, specifically a Latin American country, Chile. I recognize the different background and sociocultural distances with my interviewees. In general I was younger than nine of the participants (see general characteristic of the participants later in this chapter). I am white, making me similar to most of them (except two Asian British). I am middle class like all of them, despite most of my participants' keenness to stress their working class background. I also share with my participants some experiences as a woman who has lived gender

discrimination and struggled with diverse expressions of patriarchy. Therefore, I felt I identified with my research participants. Certainly, that has moulded my research topic and influenced my response to their stories. I have been impressed and touched by their stories, bringing my own story to my mind. I identify with their struggles and agree with many of their ideas. I felt happy, sometimes sad, and in general much moved by the opportunity of sharing their experiences. I also felt very privileged to have access to the stories of these wonderful women.

In addition, I consider that my previous training in anthropology informs my research choices and perspectives in many ways. It also explains my enjoyment of the fieldwork. I felt my anthropological identity reinvigorated, researching in an 'unknown space', discovering 'others', going to different cities and places to meet my interviewees. I like to play with the idea of doing research as an anthropologist in another culture with people who do not share my background as a Chilean and Latin American woman, inverting the historical tradition in anthropology, now studying 'western women'. My place of birth and upbringing also implies differences in the worldviews, in addition with my Latin American background that I did not share with anyone. This last feature is interesting in the sense I am a woman researcher from the 'global south' studying women from the 'global north', using the concepts of Connell (2007) and this also has implications in terms of the production of knowledge and how I am positioned as researcher. This is a distinctive feature in my research career because it is the first time I have conducted research with women from the global north and different from me in that way. However, it is also the first time I have done research on women similar to me as they are predominantly white and middle class, despite the fact I do not come from a working class background as many of them did. My past research experiences included women from the global south in Mexico and in Chile, but from differing socioeconomic positions, such as rural indigenous women and urban working class women, and in that sense I was positioned very differently as a researcher, in terms of status and class.

Moreover, my professional/academic life has been related to women and gender issues and the promotion of change in order to have gender equality. I generally have defined myself as having gender awareness more than being a feminist. This is because I am not a feminist activist in terms of having a public and active role in women's movements in my country. However, I

profoundly admired all the women that are feminist and activist, as the ones I meet also here. At this point in my life I will say I am a feminist in terms of my ideas, my research and having an inclusive definition of 'feminisms' as concerned with women's rights and gender equality. As explained at the beginning, my ontological and epistemological stance is taken from feminist theory and feminist thought. Accordingly, I felt profoundly involved with my research topic and my participants, despite the fact that the relationship with each woman and her story was different. Another issue in relation to this, that I feel connects me to these participants, is that this research is on ordinary women, and in that sense their feminism is an everyday life feminism.

Another issue I reflected about is the power relations in the interview situation. In many ways I did not feel more powerful than the women I interviewed, nor in a higher position or holding higher status. In general, I approached the interviews as a relationship between equals. But on some occasions I felt less power and that could be related with a number of ideas; that those women were older than me, my status as a 'student', as an outsider and/or a non native speaker of English. This manifested itself sometimes in a number of ways: hesitation on my part to make certain questions or to challenge my interviewees, worried that I could be too intrusive with my questions, or not having a sense of being an expert. On the other hand, some women talked to me assuming I had read all the feminist writers and thinkers they mentioned, for instance. This shows that my way of constructing my subjectivity as researcher did not necessarily match the interviewees' perceptions. Nevertheless, I acknowledge still my power as researcher in the sense I made the questions and manage the interview situation according to my research interest.

As stated before, I reflected on my social positioning, personal background, professional training and academic trajectory acknowledging the consequences in terms of the production of this research and my assumptions. I have thought critically about my positioning as insider/outsider and the complexities of it. As a woman, I can be an insider in relation to my research participants, as also regarding other similarities I pointed out, such as being white. On the other hand, I am an outsider, as I come from another country, with a different historical and cultural background, from the global south, a different generation to some of them and in an academic

position. This belonging to different social worlds, or living and researching 'at the edges', carried some tension and discomfort, but also allowed some productive insights for the research (Ribbens and Edwards 1998, 4).

General characteristic of the participants

The participants in this research are fifth teen feminist women, schoolteachers, geographically dispersed throughout England and from different generations. I present the participants' general timelines (see Figure 2 in this chapter) of all of the interviewees indicating the year of birth, year when they went into higher education and when they began teaching. Some of their basic sociodemographic features are presented later on in Figure 3 and 4 when describing each generation of participants. To offer a brief outline, I will mention some of their characteristics. Their ages ranged between thirty and sixty seven years; most of them self described as coming from working class backgrounds (twelve); and predominantly white with some of mixed origins (two Asian British and three mixed white). Regarding their teaching profiles, the majority are secondary schoolteachers (thirteen); they have taught between six and thirty six years; and at the time of the interview eleven were working as teachers (full and part time) and four were retired (no more than six years prior to the time of the interview). They had different working trajectories as shown for instance in the example that for seven of them teaching was their second profession. Most of them self identify as 'feminist' (thirteen), nevertheless according to my inclusive definition of feminism, all of them are feminist. The majority of them are members of their unions (thirteen) and five of them have or had leadership roles in their unions; and some are or were engaged in gender/feminist activism (seven).

Figure 2 Participants' general timelines

Postwar Era							Neoliberal Era							
45	1950	55	1960	65	1970	75	1980	85	1990	95	2000	05	2010	15
						79 Ana					03 Teach		13/14 first int.	15 second int.
							80 Luisa					06 Teach		
							80 Rosa					05 Teach		
							84 Cyndi					08 Teach		
							84 Virginia				03 University	07 Teach		
				69 Fatima					93 Teach					
				67 Juana						98 Teach				
				66 Andrea			85 University	92 PGCE	93 Teach					
			63 Rosemund								04 Teach			
		55 Esperanza			74 TTC	77 Teach					Back teaching			
		54 Brigida			73 TTC	77 Teach							13 Retired	
48 Gabriela							84 University		90 Teach			08 Retired		
		57 Victoria					81 Teach							
	51 Violeta						80 Teach							
46 Soledad						78 Teach								

Legends	Two digits:	indicate in each case year of birth, beginning in higher education, beginning of teaching and year of retirement.
	Blue letters:	neoliberal generation
	Green letters:	postwar generation
	Green:	five core narratives
	Light green:	early years life
	Dark green:	teaching years
	Red letters	years interviews

I have distinguished between two generations of teachers, postwar and neoliberal, mostly to stress the different historical eras in which they were born and lived and how those times influenced their subjectivities. These eras, also labelled as 'postwar' and 'neoliberal', are analysed in chapter three. I used the concept of generation to point to a specific historical time in which my participants grew up and to the general historical circumstances they shared. Nevertheless, I found that the concept of 'generation' has some limitations in the sense it downplays the diversity of experiences of individuals. Therefore, I used it in a very limited way so as to ensure acknowledgement of the plurality of experiences in the same generation, as I discuss in chapter four and five. Similarly, Traies (2016) found differences inside generations in her research on the lives of older lesbians living in England. Accordingly, by labelling my participants as part of a postwar or neoliberal generation, I am not assuming heterogeneity, nor that they have a postwar or neoliberal subjectivity.

In this thesis I refer to the postwar generation teachers as those participants who were born in the postwar era (1945-1979), specifically between 1946 and 1969 (see Figure 3). It includes ten of my participants whose ages varied between forty four and sixty seven years at the moment of the first interview (Soledad, Gabriela, Violeta, Victoria, Bridget, Esperanza, Rosemund, Andrea, Juana, Fatima). They have lived under the welfare state and the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, including the feminist movements of that time. Most of them benefited from welfare educational policies. For instance Victoria (aged fifty seven), who began working as a nursery teacher and then studied in the evenings to be qualified as a teacher, stated that to do that 'nowadays would be very difficult'. Some went into Teaching Training Colleges in the 1970s as in the cases of Bridget (aged fifty nine) and Esperanza (aged fifty eight). Others studied at university as did Andrea (aged forty seven), Juana (aged forty seven) and Gabriela (aged sixty five). Their trajectories are diverse despite being from the same generation. The narratives of Bridget and Gabriela in chapter four showed the plurality of trajectories, how they lived through and were influenced by the postwar era regarding their subjectivity constructions. My participants of the postwar generation began to teach in the 1970s onwards; this is because some of the older ones came later to the profession. Their teaching careers have lasted between nine and thirty six years, with diverse professional trajectories.

Figure 3 General characteristics of postwar generation participants

Pseudonym	Age	Class back-ground	Ethnicity	Teaching 1st/ 2nd occupation	Years teaching	Working scheme	Place last school	Last School Type	Last Position	Union Roles (past/ present)	Date Interview
Rosemund	50	Middle class	Asian British	2nd	9	PT 50%	North England	Secondary	Tutor	Officer	2013
Andrea	47	Working class	White British	2nd	20	FT	London	Secondary	Teacher/ Head of Department	Member Representative Advisor	2013/15
Fatima	44	Working class	Asian British	1st	20	PT 75%	North England	Secondary	Teacher/ KS Coordinator	Member	2013
Bridget	59	Working class	White British (mix)	1st	36	Retired from FT	North England	Secondary	Teacher	Member Representative	2013/15
Gabriela	65	Working class	White British (mix)	2nd	15	Retired from PT	South England	Secondary	Teacher	Member	2013/15
Violeta	63	Working class	White British	2nd	33	Retired from FT	North England	Secondary	Teacher/Assist ant Head Teacher	Member	2013
Soledad	67	Working class	White British	2nd	36	Retired from FT	South England	Secondary	Teacher, Head of Department	Member	2014
Esperanza	58	Working class	White British	1st	30	FT	North England	Secondary Severe Emotional Behavioural	Supply Teacher	Member Representative Advisor	2014/15
Victoria	57	Working class	White British	2nd	33	FT	Mid England	Primary	Deputy Head teacher	Member	2014
Juana	47	Working class	White British (mix)	2nd	16	PT 75%	South England	Secondary	Teacher/ inset coordinator	Member Representative	2014

Legend: core narrative

The neoliberal generation of teachers refers to five of my participants who were born during the neoliberal era, specifically between the years of 1979 and 1984 (see Figure 4). There are Ana, Luisa, Rosa, Cyndi and Virginia. Their ages ranged between thirty and thirty seven years at the moment of the first interview, therefore as a group they were much younger than the postwar generation. All of them have been schooled under the National Curriculum introduced in 1988 (see context chapter three). All of them went to the university, having to pay for their degrees after the introduction of fees in 1998 (see Figure 5 Britain's historical timeline in chapter three). Virginia (aged thirty one), whose narrative is analysed in chapter four, shows how she experienced the neoliberal era and its influences regarding the construction of her feminist subjectivity.

These neoliberal generation teachers have been teaching for between six and ten years, from the 2003 onwards, also with diverse trajectories. Some went straight into teaching as in the cases of Rosa (aged thirty three) and Ana (aged thirty seven). Others, such as Luisa (aged thirty three) had experience after university in working abroad in education and development, whereas Cyndi (aged thirty) and Virginia both completed a Masters level degree before teaching.

Figure 4 General characteristics neoliberal generation participants

Pseudonym	Age	Class back-ground	Ethnicity	Teaching 1st/ 2nd occupation	Years teaching	Working scheme	Place last school	Last School Type	Last Position	Union Roles (past/ present)	Date Interview
Ana	37	Middle class	White British	1st	10	FT	Mid England	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher	No membership	2013
Luisa	33	Working class	White British	1st	7	FT	South England	Secondary	Teacher/ Head of Department	Member	2013
Rosa	33	Working class	White British	1st	8	FT	South England	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher/ Head of Department	Member	2013
Cyndi	30	Working class	White British	1st	6	PT 80%	North England	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher/ Course Leader	No membership	2014
Virginia	31	Middle class	White British	1st	8	PT (before FT)	London	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher, Head of Department	Member	2015/16

Legend: core narrative

As the research unfolded, issues of 'intersectionality' came to the fore regarding gender, social class and ethnicity. This appears in the narratives analysed in chapter four and five, where intersectional subjectivities are constructed especially stressing the working class background of some participants and their Irish background such as Gabriela and Bridget. The concept of 'intersectionality' refers to the 'multiple social positioning' that a woman can have including for instance gender, race, ethnicity, and class (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006, 187). Particularly regarding social class, I am using my participants' self labelling. Generally, they told me that they are from 'working class backgrounds', or 'middle class' backgrounds. Some of them acknowledged that currently they are middle class, having experienced social mobility from their initial position in their homes of origin, to their current position. I have used my participants' definition of class because '[classed] subjective identities and identifications are powerful markers' (Hey 1997, 147) and are part of their constructed subjectivities. Despite not being a focus of my work, I am aware of the discussion on class location of teachers, as for instance, the posture of Apple who indicates that teachers have 'a contradictory class location' because they are 'located simultaneously in two classes' in the sense 'they shared interests of both the petty bourgeoisie and the working class' (2013, 116-17).

Regarding ethnicity and race, these issues have come to the fore for five of my participants. In this research, two of my participants had Asian backgrounds (Rosemund and Fatima), two Irish backgrounds (Bridget and Gabriela), and one French background (Juana). I only developed these issues as part of their life stories in the case of Bridget and Gabriela. I developed these issues as part of their lives stories (see chapter four). With them I did second round interviews, being part of the core narratives. In these narratives, I had more data regarding their Irish origins and their implications in their subjectivity constructions. In the other cases, I did not have a second round interview and therefore there was not enough information to develop those issues properly.

All of my participants have a pseudonym so I can identify them and maintain anonymity. Some of the participants chose their pseudonyms, but most of them were my own selection. I tried to pick a characteristic of each of them to remember easily, for example, Bridget, because of her Irish parents, or Esperanza as the meaning of this name is 'hope' and illustrated for me her

feminist attitude. Sometimes it was a historical women they cited in the interviews. For instance I select the name Andrea for one of my interviewees as she mentioned Andrea Dworkin and declares herself a radical feminist when young and nowadays more a socialist feminist, very active in her union on gender and women issues. At other times it was my own association of them with a historical woman, such as Virginia Woolf for Virginia because of her intellectual profile; or Gabriela, who reminded me of Gabriela Mistral, a Chilean poet who won the 1945 Nobel prize for literature and was also a very passionate teacher.

The potential of adapted life story interviews

In the next section, I explore some of my reflections in response to the 'adapted life story interviews' with a narrative approach that I conducted as a methodological tool. By 'adapted', as explained previously in the chapter, I refer mainly to the mixture of life story with biographical narratives and to my use of a semi structured interview done in a shorter time period than generally life stories and biographical narratives. This was according to a pragmatic decision based on the difficulties of finding teachers as they do not have much time available. The discussion here points to the kind of data gathered and what a life story interview allowed. I argue that the potential of adapted life story interviews relates to the focus on the whole life: to the narrative approach in terms of allowing the telling of a life: to the way the interviews were conducted in terms of openness and flexibility: and, in the case of the core narratives, to the possibility of a second round interview. The analysis points to the potential of this kind of method especially in terms of the topic of my research, the construction of subjectivities.

In terms of the way in which the interviews were conducted, I highlight here their aim, to open up a reflection on the everyday lives lived by ordinary women. When I asked the questions or follow up question, on many occasions my participants paused, trying to first structure their ideas. They needed time to think and elaborate their thinking before answering. I could see the difficulty they found in attempting to answer the questions and many have no straightforward answers, even some of them said that the question were difficult to answer. They babble, they think aloud, they were looking for the right words to express what they wanted. Some of them voiced the difficulties as the subsequent quote illustrates, '...I was struggling to

remember things, but really describe things accurately, that was the hard bit I think. ...pushing forward with the thinking... [...] ...wanting to provide accurate reflections...' (Esperanza, second interview). In general they stated that it allowed reflection, especially when asked in the second session what happened to them in the first interview. They mentioned that it was done in an 'introspective way', involving 'meta thinking', and it 'open a level of consciousness' (Andrea); that made Bridget 'delve deeper', 'analyse, look back and go forwards' and was 'thought provoking' . All these expressions are indicative of a process of reflection about themselves and their lives that took place during and after the interviews. These reflections also included being critical with their stories, questioning what they have really shared about themselves and the active process of producing a story. For instance, the words of Andrea illustrate this point.

You think, I'm telling you... in the answers... have I told you the truth? Or have I created a myth about myself. Have I made [it]... or is that [the truth]... Was that true or was I just trying to find something to say. So, there is quite a lot of meta thinking going on about what I said and whether what I said was [true], which is interesting (Andrea, in her 40s, Postwar generation).

In some cases, the reflections stimulated by the interview allowed realisations about some meanings or connections in their lives. It is like the crystallisation of an idea, a moment of epiphany, a revelation, where something 'makes sense' and became meaningful. The act of telling a story helped clarifying things (Atkinson 2002). One example of this revelation happened in the case of Andrea when she expressed, in the context of her personal, professional and political life, new connections and meanings, as above,

I reflect... when I was thinking back, I hadn't thought before about how, you know, my parents and the way they were and the way they treated me... I didn't... [I] hadn't thought before about how that interacted [in my life] and so that was interesting. But... Yes it opened up a level of consciousness I suppose in my own mind that you keep and you build on that. (Andrea, in her 40s, postwar generation).

Moreover, especially for retired women or towards the end of their careers, the interviews allowed them to make an assessment of their life through telling their stories. This occurs for instance in the case of Gabriela, in our

second interview, when she drew some conclusion about her life and took some decisions.

It gave me a chance to sort of remember a lot of things that have gone a bit fuzzy because they are in the past, but I recreate those for you on answering those questions. So yes I'm very pleased to relate this and actually I'm thinking very seriously about writing my sort of life story for my children really (Gabriela, in her 60s, postwar generation).

And she added later on as a kind of conclusion of her life story,

[I have] Just a tremendous sense of gratitude, really, for my life and the opportunities that I had. It just reminded me of all of those reasons to be grateful, to certainly, women and men who have gone before me who organised the society that I was born into. [...] the way I have lived in this window of opportunity for working class people and what I have done with it has been so wonderful and I want my children to see that this was a joy to me, and so fortunate to have lived in this time. I don't know how somebody like me would have survived in a more repressive time for both women and the working class. That would have been absolutely dreadful. So I have lived in wonderful times. [...] I took all the opportunities that it offered, to be happy and to be joyous and free, and it was brilliant! And with feminism attached to that, perfect! (Gabriela, in her 60s, postwar generation).

This quote also highlights how past and present is put together in the story and her sense of being. The present is evaluated in relation with her past experiences, meaning that the whole life is addressed in the present.

In some interviews there is an element of recognition to the person who is giving the interview. As Atkinson state 'telling our story enables us to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged by others' (Atkinson 1998, 7). They realize that someone is interested in their life experiences and this validated their stances, thoughts and actions, constructing a sense of themselves in relation to others. As Gabriela said, 'nobody was interested [in my life]' and she ended the sessions being grateful to have the opportunity to tell her story and be heard,

I would like to thank you as the interviewer for asking me such interesting questions. I think you have been very comprehensive in your questions, in encouraging me to give a full picture to you and how my thoughts have developed and what influences I had in my life for me to be the person I have become (Gabriela, in her 60s, postwar generation).

Conclusion

The research process conducted was full of complexities, changes and challenges that brought together ‘intermixed theoretical and practical dilemmas’ (Ribbens and Edwards 1998, 1). As exposed before, for instance, my criteria for selecting the participants changed as the research unfolded, with implications on my research results. Furthermore, when writing this chapter initially, I faced difficulties thinking what the focus of the methodology should be: the initial point of departure, the messiness of the process and changes, or with what I ended up as the final result of the research process. I wanted to show the process, but also, I needed to show the final methodology used. This relates to one of the feminist dilemmas regarding the question of ‘who our research is for’ (Ribbens and Edwards 1998, 204). As these authors stated it is a mixture of all and the dilemma lies on where the balance is. I am writing for academic purposes, but also for my research participants and at the same time moved by personal reasons. It is complex to put it all together. In that sense, in the writing process, as I wanted my PhD to be a piece of work valued as authoritative knowledge in academia, I made an explicit effort to comply with requirements of clarity, argumentation and coherence. In that effort to conform to mainstream academic procedures I have risked ‘losing the voices of my participants’ and faced also the complexities of re-representing them; which is another dilemma in term of how to produce public knowledge and at the same time ‘remain faithful to our research participant’s experiences and accounts’ (Ribbens and Edwards 1998, 203). As these authors suggest, I have attempted to engaged with “high standards of reflexivity and openness about the choices made throughout’ my research (Ribbens and Edwards 1998, 4).

Additionally, the research results made me rethink original problematic assumptions and concepts. For instance, as the research unfolded I have changed my initial assumptions about what is feminism and activism. I ended up with an inclusive definition of feminism and also an idea of feminist activism that does not take as the parameter 1970s women’s liberation movement. Feminist activism and politics have changed along the years and have been put into action in different forms and spaces, as the research participants did in their classrooms and in other individual and collective activism. Furthermore, my own self positioning as a researcher has changed, as I did not identify myself as a feminist researcher as I came through the

development of the thesis (see section: I the researcher). These are a few examples of the complexities involved in the research process, which were difficult to explicitly put in writing, as writing tends to follow a linear path.

In this chapter, I have reconstructed in a linear way the messiness of the process of knowledge production in this research. I have explained my departure points in terms of the feminist framework that guided my practice, discussing the ontological and epistemological stances involved that permeate my methodology. I have presented the qualitative methods used for data collection and ethical issues, explaining my choice and adaptation of life story interviews with a narrative approach, conducted through in depth, semi structured qualitative interviews.

I explained the research and fieldwork process detailing how the fieldwork was conducted, including methodological and logistic issues. I explained that I have accessed my participants mainly through union networks of teachers; the criteria for the initial selection of the participant and later on for the subsample. Furthermore, I explained the conditions in which the interviews were produced, the interview situation including issues of location, emotional climate and relationships with the participants. I have exposed the challenges encountered in each phase of the research and the strategies adopted. In the end, the result of the fieldwork was fifteen life stories, of which five were carried through a second round of thematic, in depth, semi structured interviews. The five cases constitute the 'core narratives' used especially in chapter four and five. I also included the procedures of registering, self debriefing after the interviews, transcriptions and analytical strategies used to organize and produce the data. I used a thematic analysis with a narrative approach for my data, using 'core narratives' for chapter four and five, and all the life stories for chapter six. Furthermore, I discussed issues about reflexivity and positionality concerning myself as a researcher, including power relations and subjectivity. Then I proceeded with a general characterization of the fifteen participants differentiating them in two generations, postwar and neoliberal. I finished the chapter with an analytical section about the potential and opportunities provided by life story interviews in order to deepen the subjectivity constructions and the reflections by my participants.

In the following chapter, I describe and analyse the historical context in which the life stories of my participants are situated. I organise it into two eras, the

postwar and neoliberal era in coherence with the distinction of postwar and neoliberal generations of teachers. This analysis aims to provide a broader understanding of where these stories are situated and the context in which the emerging subjectivities are produced.

Chapter 3 The context of postwar and neoliberal eras in Britain, zeitgeist and feminist movements

Introduction

In the present chapter I proceed to contextualize the narratives of my participants. I do this by a general characterization and analysis of what I define as the postwar and neoliberal eras. For the purpose of this research, the chapter is a selective introduction to the times in which the feminist teachers have lived, rather than a comprehensive historical context. The selection of the topics is moulded by what all fifteen participants shared with me, the issues they mentioned as important from their historical times in which they lived, and the links and references they made are presented as part of this chapter. In addition, it is my own selection of the issues that I consider to be relevant for the construction of feminist subjectivities. This means, I have emphasized the different 'zeitgeists' or 'spirit of the times' and the presence of feminist movements and different feminist sensibilities that have impacted on the creation of the subjectivities of these women.

Regarding feminism in these two eras, I would like to note that it is not the aim of this chapter to characterize the different kinds of feminism, or to define them. This includes any discussions about 'second wave' feminism and the other waves before and after. For the purpose of this research, I used the concept 'second wave' to refer to the feminist movement around the 1960s and 70s but in a general way, rather than linking it to a specific theoretical position. As said in the introduction, I acknowledge the critical stances regarding a linear, static and homogenous interpretation of feminist movement and thought (Hemmings 2012 and Dean 2010). David's work (2014), which had also inspired my research, used the term 'second wave' feminist to refer to three cohorts of feminist academics born between 1935 and 1980. In my case, I schematically differentiated the times represented in the life stories into two periods, the 'postwar era' (1945-1979) and the

'neoliberal era' (1980-2015⁴). Clearly this is a general division that leaves out many historical differences and nuances, but the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the general spirit of each time, some historical issues and feminist movements, as well as sensibilities which are related to the construction of feminist subjectivities. I argue that each era influenced the way in which my participants lived their lives and therefore the way they construct their feminist subjectivities. These issues are developed in all chapters, especially in chapter four where biography and historical contexts are linked together.

The narratives that are the focus of this research are told in contemporary Britain. However these women, as presented in chapter two, were born in different historical periods and therefore were the products of different historical influences. These different historical starting points set completely different sociocultural contexts and experiences, which are then reconstructed in the telling of life stories by the feminist teachers. Therefore, it is important to contextualize those life stories; to acknowledge the distinctive scenarios embedded in the stories told. These different times have impact in the way they construct their feminist subjectivities and their stories. Moreover, many of the stories these women told refer to distinctive scenarios and historical moments, which locate them in relation to the past and the present.

The chapter is organized in two sections, the first presenting the postwar era and the second the neoliberal era. I also include a visual historical timeline (Figure 5) of both eras to illustrate what was happening in British society in terms of social, economic and political issues; specifically feminism, social movements and educational issues.

Postwar era (1945-1979)

For my interviewees, the most relevant issues mentioned about the postwar era were related to the establishment of the Welfare State and a sense of optimism and progress in people's lives during those times in England, particularly for women as Gabriela (65) whose narrative is presented in chapter four. For Luisa, a woman in her 30s, from the neoliberal generation, the difference from postwar era and neoliberal one, was 'the optimism' and

⁴ Year when the last second round interview was taken.

the idea of 'experimenting with things' referring to the 1960s and 70s, a vision she had from her father's experiences and diaries. For some of my respondents, such as Gabriela, Bridget and Violeta (postwar generation teachers), the postwar era opened opportunities for working class people and specifically for working class women. They mention opportunities related to access to education and social services, such as health services and housing. In addition, they refer to the decades of the 1960s and 70s as a time of massive social upheaval and struggles for social justice, which parallel with the presence of feminist movements as a salient topic in their narratives. I consider the influences of these constructions of their history as part of their narratives in order to elaborate their feminist subjectivities. Therefore, those historical issues are highlighted in these sections. However, I am aware that this is a construction that can even be thought of as a 'myth' and an idealization of those times. I acknowledge the constructed nature of past in the narratives and the selective processes implicated; therefore the experiences of my respondents represent a partiality of individual experience, they do not represent the experiences of all English women in the postwar era.

What I identify here as the postwar era covers from 1945 until the end of the 1970s in Britain (see Figure 5 Britain's Historical Timeline). It includes what historians called the 'Golden Age', ranging from 1947 to 1973, in reference to a period of extraordinary economic growth and social transformation (Hobsbawm 1994, 6), with unemployment statistics in the United Kingdom under or around 3% between 1945 and 1973 (Denman and McDonald 1996). I also include the years after 1973, which were a kind of transition time, marked by economic crisis and social protest. This period after the Second World War until mid-1970s is when 'the social democratic state has been consolidated in Britain' (Harvey 2005, 23). This form of state aimed for 'full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens'. This form of 'state managed capitalism' (Fraser 2013) or 'political economic organization', is identified as 'embedded liberalism'; it was characterise by market regulations through 'a web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment' which in the case of Britain involved 'state led planning' and 'state ownership of key sectors' (Harvey 2005, 10-11).

Immigration has been part of the British landscape from earlier, but after the Second World War there was a demand for labour that encouraged

immigration, added with other factors (Black 2010, 132; Royle 2012, 90). In 1948 the British Nationality Act 'guaranteed freedom of entry from the Commonwealth and colonies' (Black 2010, 133). Those groups who made 'a major impact on the social history of the country' are the Irish; Jews (mainly Eastern European); Africans, and African-Caribbeans; and Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis from the Indian subcontinent (Royle 2012, 82). Some of my participants have these backgrounds, such as Gabriela and Bridget (Irish origins); Rosemund and Fatima (Indian and Pakistani origins) and Virginia (Jewish ancestors).

The first Labour government of Attlee (1945–51) established a set of legislative acts that allowed the consolidation of the welfare state. Different core areas of the society were nationalized and organized by the state through public policies and state owned systems. Social security services, health, housing, education, energy and transport were some of the priorities established in public policy. In 1948, the Labour government established 'free healthcare and free secondary education' (Todd 2014, 157). There was a general consensus between the alternating Conservatives and Labour governments until the 1970s around Keynesian economics and social welfare. Initially, the nation lived through a period of economic stability and full employment. Despite that, working class people needed to work hard doing overtime and shift work in the 1950s (Todd 2014, 200). Gabriela, for instance, (sixty five) mentioned her father always working overtime. Violeta (sity three) also mentioned living as a child in a council house. Later on the in the 1960s, seemed different for some young people, especially in London, as shown in the experience of Gabriela. She stated that when she worked there as a young woman, 'you could quit your job on Friday and have another one on Monday', in times of full employment.

In terms of equality legislation there were several improvements during this period. As early as 1961 the contraceptive pill was introduced; there was a revision of the Married Women's Property Act in 1964. Later on there was the establishment of the Race Relations Act in 1965, the Abortion Act and the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967; the Equal Pay Act in 1970; the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 and Domestic Violence Act in 1976 (British Library, n/d). Women were becoming visible again in the public sphere after a period of less public activity, pushing for changes and rights, with the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) of the 1970s as a significant

expression of feminism, which also was referred to as the era of 'second wave' feminism.

Social demands for equality and progress were pushed forward in postwar times, especially from working classes. Unions were important actors through which many social demands were expressed and negotiated as part of the 'postwar consensus'; unions grew in members during the postwar era and until 1979 (Wrigley 2002); they had political power, visibility, prestige and strong representation in the Labour Party (Toye 2013, Kavanagh 1992). By the 1970s, they still had power but the consensus disappeared (Reitan 2003). Female participation in the unions was important especially in sectors such as education, where women outnumbered male members; however, they were underrepresented in leadership roles (Holloway 2005, Lawrence 1994) showing the prevalence of patriarchal practices.

In parallel, different social movements began to take force such as pacifist movements, feminist movements and anti racist movements. For instance, the anti Vietnam movement that grew in the mid-sixties generating protest demonstrations at universities and the formation of the British Council for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV) in 1965 (Ellis 2009). Gabriela, for example, mentioned that she 'became initially politicised' with the anti Vietnam War protest in London; her narrative is addressed in the next chapter (four). Nevertheless, political activism of all kinds, including traditional politics is considered a 'minority sport in Britain' and traditional politics participation is sporadic, limited to a vote and contacting an MP (Byrne 1997, 3).

Especially during the late 1960s and the 70s, feminism as a social movement and a political project comes to the fore in Britain (see Figure 5 Britain's Historical Timeline) as part of a broader move in Europe and North America (Charles 2015). In England, the first national WLM conference took place in Oxford in 1970 and every year till the last one in Birmingham in 1978; their discussion and demands were synthesized in equal pay, equal educational and job opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand, and free twenty four hour nurseries; later being added (1974) legal and financial independence for all women and the right to a self defined sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians (British Library 2014). Through that time local groups and organizations propagated; there were massive national campaigns, such as the National Abortion Action Campaign (initiated in 1975), and the campaigns to set up rape crisis centres, women's refuges and

housing programmes (Caine 1997, 271); and centres and foundations for women were created, like Women's Aid established in 1974. There were women's only strikes in some places. For example, the Ford machinists' strike in Dagenham in 1968 and the Leeds women clothing workers' strike in 1970 which gathered 20,000 women from 45 factories that marched in protest (British Library 2014). In addition, feminism was also present in terms of women writers that populated the landscape of those times. Books, novels and more academic works of feminists were published and available for the general public, not only in Britain but also in other Anglo speaking countries that were influential, such as US feminist writers. The influence of these feminist writers on the subjectivity constructions of my participants is an issue elaborated in chapter five. There were also alternative and independent feminist publications such as 'Spare Rib' Magazine, the first issue of which was released in 1972 and continued until 1993. Feminist issues were discussed on the radio and in newspapers as some of my interviewees stated in their interviews. For instance, postwar generation teachers Bridget and Gabriela mentioned the BBC's 'Women's Hour' and 'The Guardian' women's page as permanent sources of information and debate. In summary, there was a diverse range of feminist discourses available in different spaces and places at the time and the movement was gaining more visibility as well as being recognized by the state and internationally. In 1975 the United Nations declared an International 'Year for Women' aiming to improve awareness about women's rights.

The decades of the 1960s and 70s 'can be and have been represented as period of immense hopefulness and growth', with 'rapid social and sexual transformation' (Caine 1997, 271). There were increasing spaces in different spheres of society for debates in terms of values and ideas around women, feminism and gender roles. It is a time of experiments and criticism. For some women in Britain, as some of my participants, the times of the late 1960s, 70s and 80s were an opportunity to explore different ways of being a woman and raising awareness of their condition as women. They rejected the established model of women's domesticity of the early postwar period, where 'conservative discourses of womanhood' were associated and prescribed as being 'respectable (including in sexual terms), self effacing, modest' and willing 'to care for and serve others' (Abrams 2014, 16). These discourses were in conflict with the growing presence of feminist movements and feminist discourses. As Andrea, a teacher in her late 40s, states, feminism

was very present and everywhere, 'feminism was in the atmosphere'. For her and others such as Bridget, there was a general sense that being feminist was an obvious place to be. This does not mean that they did not face discrimination and barriers and difficulties at those times. Some grew up seeing the equality laws becoming a reality, such as Bridget regarding the Maternity Leave during her initial teaching years.

Regarding the Women's liberation movement (WLM) Charles (2015, 42) state that was based on the idea of 'similar experiences and a shared identity' of women, that were expressed 'as women's interest'. Especially in the early to mid-1970s, this emphasis on common oppression was associated with the idea of 'sisterhood' (Byrne 1997, 112). Despite that, some authors highlight different orientations from the beginning of the WLM, which included socialist feminist, radical feminist and liberal feminist and a multitude of different groups as a characteristic of British 'second wave' women's movement, including working class women and lesbian women (Cain 1997, Byrne 1997). Tensions related to race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation were present to the point of bringing 'to an end any attempt to provide a national framework or focus for the women's movement' for instance in the last WLM's conference in 1978 (Caine 1997, 267). The WLM was criticised because of its 'implicit and explicit racism' (Caine 1997, 267). Despite the fact the movement 'campaigned against racism, it was a white-dominated movement' (British Library 2014). Black feminism was developing its own political and theoretical space. For instance, in 1973 the Brixton Black Women's Group was formed; in 1978 the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) and in 1979 the Southall Black Sisters was founded (British Library 2014).

The diversity that was, until a certain point less highlighted for strategic and political reasons came to the fore. This broadening of the movement led to a shift in the way of naming the movement, from "feminism" to "feminisms" (Cain 1997, 269). It also contributed in the late 70s to the end of the specific epoch of 'second wave' feminism and the fragmentation of the movement, but at the same time allowed the dissemination of feminism throughout society (Charles 2015). 'Second wave' feminism did not follow conventional ways of doing politics and was done in the form of direct action and campaigns. Women's activism was 'loosely coordinated at a national level but existed primarily in local women's groups, which were both

consciousness raising and involved in political activity' (Lovenduski and Randall 1993 and Charles 2000 in Charles 2015, 42). These small consciousness raising groups enacted a different way of doing politics linking personal and political very closely. Political participation of women included changing 'the way they lived as well as how they conducted themselves in the political arena' (Hughes 2012, 22). This way of doing politics 'concerned itself with the subjective', as the WLM groups were 'a medium of personal as well as social transformation' (Hughes 2012, 26). These collective women only spaces are something that marked feminist politics and that clearly impacted on the subjectivity constructions of women. This is raised in the narratives of some of the teachers in chapter five regarding other meaningful women in their lives. This form of feminist politics widespread in the 1970s, was also happening at the beginning of the 80s. Specifically regarding the 'second wave' feminism, there is a tendency to construct it as static and homogeneous. My participants from the postwar generation of teachers lived through this time of 'second wave' feminism, and some such as Bridget and Esperanza were part of it, inside or outside the profession space. Bridget's involvement in an informal group of young women teachers at the end of the 1970s is developed in her story in chapter four.

Another significant topic in the narratives of the teachers regarding the postwar era is education (see Figure 5 historical timeline). Education was, following Ranson (2008), one of the core public policy issues during the postwar period (1955-75). There was 'a broad social and political consensus' regarding the centrality of education in terms of allowing 'economic growth, equality of opportunity and social justice' (op.cit.). The increase of 'the birth rate, economic growth and, most importantly, political will for social reform, coalesced in the expansion of education' (Ranson 2008, 2). The Education Act of 1944, implemented in 1947, established free secondary education; the leaving age for school at 15 and banned the marriage bar for teachers (Fawcett 2016). This act also set a system of educational governance based on 'a tacit rule of professional providers' and a 'framework to support the growth of a service committed to the expansion of opportunity' (Ranson 2008, 2). They replaced the qualifying examination by the 'selective "eleven plus"', that was taken by every pupil, and which resulted in attendance at one of three types of school according to the aptitude of the children. In theory, grammar schools were for academic aptitudes, technical schools 'for those with special abilities of a more practical nature and secondary modern

for the non specialist' (Royle 2012, 427). However, the reality was that 'there were grammar school places for only about 20 per cent of children and technical places for no more than 5 percent', ending most of the pupils' population in secondary modern schools (Ibid). This tripartite system was considered by some as discriminatory for the majority of the pupil population (Royle 2012; Black 2010; Ranson 2008). Later on, there was a movement in educational policy towards introducing comprehensive schools in 1965, which did not replace the tripartite school system, but was especially implemented by Labour local educational authorities. The aim of that model was to produce an education oriented to building community at local level (Benn 2013).

For the postwar generation teachers in this research, who mostly came from working class backgrounds, the educational Welfare State policies provided some opportunities, despite the selective system. Without free education and maintenance grants, they would not have been able to pursue the study they account for in their testimonies. However, the educational trajectories of my participants were very diverse and some of them not usual. For instance, Bridget, (fifty nine years old), despite failing the 'eleven plus' exam went to a grammar school as she explains in her narrative in chapter four. Victoria (aged fifty seven), began as a nursery assistant and then, during her work, studied to be qualified as a teacher in the evenings, something she believes would be 'very difficult nowadays'. Gabriela (aged sixty five), also failed the 'eleven plus' exam and when she finished school at sixteen went straight to work, but encountered the opportunity as an adult to study part time at university. Andrea (aged forty eight) attended a comprehensive school in the 1960s as part of what 'labour people do, support your local school' and went to the university in the 1980s without paying fees (see Figure 5: Britain's Historical Timeline). Some of these issues and their impacts are developed in depth in their narratives in next chapters (four and five).

Regarding higher education, the expansion of the sector in the 1960s opened more opportunities for students of different backgrounds. Nevertheless, accordingly to Dyhouse (2006) the turning point for women in higher education was from 1970 onward, when their participation begins to rise steadily. The amount of 'women in the late 1960s was little, if any higher than in the mid 1920' (Dyhouse 2006, 102). Tracking women's access to higher education must include consideration of the great expansion of Teacher

Training Colleges during the postwar period. The data indicates that they went from 13,000 students in 1938/9 to 111,000 in 1964, with an average of 70% women from the total amount of students in the Teaching Training Colleges (Dyhouse 2006, 87). In the case of my participants, Bridget and Esperanza went into Teacher Training Colleges in the late 1970s. Soledad and Violeta went to university in the 1970s, after working in other areas. Andrea, Fatima and Juana went to universities around the 1980s still without having to pay fees, similarly to Gabriela who did it as a mature student. Some did other jobs before, doing their teaching certificates later on, even after teaching in schools, as in the case of Violeta and Juana. It is important to note that in general all my participants have very diverse professional trajectories, not following a linear path of school, university, teaching certificate and work. For seven of them, teaching has been a second profession (see Figure 2, 3 and 4 for characteristic of the participants and Figure 5 for historical timeline).

The end of what I have identified as the postwar era began in the decade of the 1970s, which is marked by a 'serious crisis of capital accumulation' and from which arose neoliberalism (Harvey 2005, 57). England was facing high inflation, slow economic growth and unemployment: 'in 1975 inflation surge to twenty six per cent and unemployment top to one million' (Ibid.). These factors also brought along social conflicts, expressed for instance in the miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974, among others, which have been mentioned by some of my participants as a topic for their activism. Another significant fact that inaugurated structural changes in British society was the conditioned austerity package handed by the International Monetary Fund to the Labour government in 1976 (Harvey 2005). In that sense, the seventies can be regarded as a kind of transition period.

Figure 5 Britain's historical timeline 1945-2015

POSTWAR ERA							NEOLIBERAL ERA							
45	1950	55	1960	65	1970	75	1980	85	1990	95	2000	05	2010	15
Feminisms							70 1st WLM Conf. ----- 1978							
53 Fawcett Society							72 1st Spare Rib -----							
46 1st BBC Womens' Hour Programm							70 A-Pornography C. 80 A-Pornography C. (VAW) 01 The F Word Webzine 10 UK Feminista							
							73 Rape CC 78 OWAAD Asian/African Descent 90 Riot girls 03 Object fight pornification 10 A-Violence A. Women mar							
							75 Women's Aid federation 81 Greenham Common -----00 04 London F Network 12 No More Page 3							
							75 Nat. Abortion Cpgn. 94 1st woman Priest							
							75 UN Wome 84 Women Against Pit Closures							
							83 Forward							
Women's strikes							68 Ford Strike 70 Leeds clothing strike (20.000 women) Post Feminist culture							
							76 Grunwick Film Processing Lab. Strike (asian women)							
Social Movements							68 May Paris 78-79 strikes, Winter Discontent 93 Teacher's SATs boycott 02 Anti Iraq War protest Ldn 10 Protest Against Fees							
							68 Anti-Vietnam war protest, London (10.000 81 Riots Liverp 85 Riots 90 'poll tax' riots 03 Anti Iraq war protest Ldn/ Mchst							
							72 Dockers and miners' strike 84 Miners's Strikes [12 month 90 March 70,000 11-12 Occupy Ldn, Anti Glob							
							1957 CND -----63 74 Miners' strike 80 CND -----83 89 Fall Berlin Wall Marches against Fees 11 A-Austerity marches							
45 Labour 51 Conserv							64 labour 70 conser 74 labour 79 Thatcher -----19 97 Blair New Labour-----2008 10 Conser.							
45-48 welfare laws (Family, Insurance, Health, Energy, Housing, Transport, etc.)							83 privatisation/deregulation 94 Railway privatised -1997.							
Equality Laws							61 Contraceptive Pill 70 Equality Pay Act--- Implemt 75 92 women right Priest 07 Gender Equality Duty							
							64 Married Women's Property Act Revision 75 Sex Discrimination Act 86 Sex Disc. (Amendt.) Act 05 Civil partnerships same sex couples							
							67 Abortion Act 76 Domestic Violence Act. 94 Marital Rape ilegal 10 Equality Act							
							67 Sex Offences Act (re.Homosexuality)							
							69 Divorce Ref. Act 06 Gender Equality Duty							
Edu Laws							56 Female teachers Equal Pay 65 Comprehensive System 88 National Curriculum 98 Tea & HE A 00 Academies 1st introduce 10 Academies Act/Free Schoo							
44 Ed.Act implet.47 free edu until 15							86 GCSE introduced HE Fees £1000 04 HE Fees £3000 12 Fees £9000							
11+ exam							11 Education Act							
Technology							75 masification computers 89 WWWeb 98 Video Gam 04 FB 07/08 smartphones massification							
Economy							73 UK join EEC 76 IMF austerity package 97 Asian Financial Crisis							
							Full employment until 1973 73-75 UK Banking Crisis 80-81 Inflation/recession 90 recession----- 00 Subprime Crisis--Recession							
45 post war consensus 'Golden Age' -----7 74 Oil Crisis							unemployment 08 Financial Crisis							

Legends	Light Violet:	issues related to gender, women and feminisms		Light blue:	issues related to govermental issues, changes in law and society	
	Dark Violet:	issues mentioned by interviewees		Dark blue	issues mentioned by the interviewees	

Neoliberal era (1980-2015)

The second period relevant for my research is what I defined as the 'neoliberal era' which is identified as the period between 1980 and 2015, when the last interview was done (see Figure 5 historical timeline). It is the moment in which the stories are narrated and all of them have experienced it at different stages in their lives. It is also the time in which five of the participants grew up, and who I labelled as the 'neoliberal generation' not necessarily implying a neoliberal subjectivity as explained in the introduction. The main features brought to the fore by my participants in their narratives in terms of the zeitgeist of the neoliberal era is a sense of contradictory times and a time of crisis. Therefore, as Gabriela and Virginia (a postwar and a neoliberal generation teacher) have expressed, a time that needs to be critically approached. There is also a great deal of concern regarding the consequences of neoliberalism in the society in general and especially on the educational system. These topics are discussed in chapter six by participants in connection to their feminist subjectivities. In terms of feminism, it is also a time of contradictions. This means that mainstream discourses elaborate the current moment as one in which 'women have it all' and gender equality has been attained. Nevertheless, my participants continue experiencing or acknowledging the presence of sexism, discrimination and sometimes gender violence in schools and society. What is distinctive regarding their narratives is that their views and values as feminist teachers are in opposition to these mainstream neoliberal discourses as developed in chapters six particularly. As argued there, it involves micro resistance to patriarchal and neoliberal practices and discourses through their pedagogical and activist commitment.

Before presenting some of the literature concerning the neoliberal era, I introduce here some insights provided by the visual timeline and group interview I conducted with women born in the neoliberal era (in their 30s) and about neoliberal times (see methodology, chapter two). As they talked through the construction of the visual timeline, they first highlighted economical and educational issues that linked the historical context and their biographies. They talked about how economic recession impacted on their personal lives and their education around the 1980s, experiencing economic difficulties in their households. As one of them said, when growing up during

the 1980s, she 'did not have any pocket money, we [she and her brothers] had to ask for things and never got them, and then we stopped asking, as there was no extra money'. They also had to undertake part time jobs during their schooling and university times. For one participant, the National Curriculum was an issue as she did not understand what was going on and she lost interest in studying and learning. Regarding higher education, they mention university studies and fees. One went to the university 'just before the fees increased dramatically' in England. Another studied in Scotland and at that time the university was free, but she 'only was able to study because of the maintenance grants', as her brother did not go to university because then fees were introduced. One participant mentioned also the recession that began with the crisis in 2008, when she graduated, facing difficulties to find a job. Another one also had difficulties finding a job after university and went to do a 'cleaning job for a while'. Regarding political issues they had different opinions. One thought 'that when New Labour came in there was a real sense of optimism', but with the Iraq war she 'lost her faith in the government' and she had 'a political awakening at that time'. In the case of another, she did not have much political culture in her upbringing, just a general idea that 'Thatcher was bad'. But even when Blair came in, she reported she did not have 'any faith in governments'. By the time of the Iraq War she 'felt powerless' and with 'no hope', and could not look 'at news because they were too negative'. Nevertheless, the participants of the group interview acknowledge changes with time and at some point around the 1990s and 2000 they talked about 'challenging the system' or resisting through small scale things, changing profession, doing a PhD, challenging things day to day. For one, after the crisis in 2008-2009 she reaffirmed her ideas that 'things are not right, the system is not working' (at that time she was a schoolteacher). Another participant working in business made a career change and began 'to challenge things on a small scale'.

When asked about their lives as women, what emerged from the group was a discussion about role models. One mentioned that for her 'there were no role models in the media, the only thing were singers, [...] The Spice Girls wasn't role models because I was too bookish and that probably I took my role models from books'. In addition, she mentioned some female teachers at school that 'had personality'. I link this with the postfeminist culture that is discussed later on in this section. For another, she had some role models in

male teachers that 'teach outside the national curriculum'. One said that she constructed role models from her reading of books. Some of them mention also their mothers as independent women, working both inside and outside the home. One had a grandmother (a lawyer) who was a role model and introduced her to reading. When asked about feminism, one indicated that in the late 1980s there was a 'betrayal to feminism' in the sense that it was perceived as 'feminism not being a good thing; feminists were portrayed in certain ways, as man haters, so I learn to not identify with them'. Despite that, later on she felt that she 'could be a feminist'. Summarising, the group interview and the timeline allowed to highlight some issues also found in the literature that are discussed in the next section.

Historically, neoliberal times in England are commonly associated with the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher that began in 1979 (Steger and Roy 2010; Harvey 2005). However, as exposed before, there were several preceding moments in the 1970s, but it is from here onward that neoliberalism became a systematic policy and way of government. Thatcher, who was the first woman to be elected as Prime Minister in Britain, embraced the 'neoliberal doctrine'. She undertook 'reforms aimed at reducing taxes, liberalizing exchange rate controls, reducing regulations, privatizing national industries and drastically diminishing the power of labour unions' (Steger and Roy 2010, 38). Her massive privatization programme include 'British Aerospace, British Telecom, British Airways, steel, electricity and gas, oil, coal, water, bus services, railways, and a host of smaller state enterprises' that were sold off (Harvey 2005, 60). Characteristic of her period was monetarism and strict budgetary control; high interest rates that resulted in an average unemployment of 'more than ten percent' in 1979-1984 (Harvey 2005, 59); and riots and strikes, such as the miners' strike in 1984 that lasted for almost one year before finally closing the pits. These protests were mentioned by Esperanza and Victoria who were supporting them. Victoria participated in a network that helped with the miners' wives and families as she was actually teaching in a mining area. After Thatcher, subsequent governments have continued more or less along the lines of neoliberal logic until the present. The 'Washington Consensus' in 1990 marked the hegemony of the neoliberal project internationally. In 1997, when Blair's New Labour government came to power, neoliberal policies continued as there was very little option to do something different, consolidating 'the role of

neoliberalism both at home and internationally' (Harvey 2005, 93). The decade of the 1980s was a very intense time. Esperanza, one of my postwar generation teachers, expressed that it was 'very political'. There were many protests, riots and social movements. Several of my participants mentioned the pacifist movement from the 1980s, especially the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in which Gabriela participated and the Greenham Common Women's Camp where Rosemund went for demonstrations. During the 1980s the CND had the highest membership, in comparison to other pacifist organisations (Byrne 1997). In addition, some of the women teachers were very active in their unions, as in the cases of Andrea, Esperanza, Bridget, Rosemund and Victoria. Despite the fact that unions had faced several curtailments and challenges during this era, in the 1990s half of the work force was still covered by collective bargaining in Britain (McIlroy 1995). Nevertheless, the 'decline of the trade unions' in neoliberal times have been documented globally (Visser 2006 cited in Walby 2011, 22).

More broadly neoliberalism refers to a form of thought with a 'tendency to elevate the status of the economic over the social' or even questioned the existence of the social at all (Gane 2014, 1104). Empirically, there are many different forms of neoliberalism (Steger and Ravi 2010) such as the Thatcher and Reagan versions in Britain and the US for instance (Harvey 2005). The concept is mainly used to address 'the new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, retasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility' (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy 2016, 2). It is understood as a paradigm with diverse dimensions, ideological, as a mode of governance and as a policy package. This means a governmentality based on 'competitiveness, self interest, and decentralization'; 'modes of governance' which transform 'bureaucratic mentalities into entrepreneurial identities'; and public policies directed towards 'deregulation of the economy; liberalization of trade and industry, and privatization of state owned enterprises' (Steger and Ravi 2010, 12-14). More specifically, it is defined as,

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey 2005, 2).

Because of the different geographical expressions of neoliberalism and ongoing 'dynamic and unfolding process' of neoliberalism, the concept 'neoliberalisation' is considered more accurate, in opposition to prevailing views as 'a pure and static end-state' (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy 2016). Scholars working on the topic concur that neoliberalism refers in general to 'the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics and society' (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy 2016, 2). This expansion of neoliberalism to different spheres of life is a feature relevant to my project. This is what I want to highlight when using the category 'neoliberal'. It is not only the economic policies undertaken and their consequences; more important is the pervasiveness of the neoliberal logic in the English society at all levels. This implies a conceptualization of neoliberalism not only as an economic system, but also as a 'hegemonic mode of discourse', that is spread throughout all levels of society, that 'has a pervasive effect on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world' (Harvey 2005, 3). This is relevant in terms of subjectivities construction as Gill and Scharff (2011) have noted, because neoliberalism works as a 'mode of political and economic rationality' that has expanded, not only in terms of 'geographical reach', but also has expanded 'across different spheres of life to constitute a novel form of governance' (2011, 5). Therefore it is relevant for the constructions of subjectivities in terms of the discourses available to understand and make sense of the world. This pervasiveness of neoliberal logic is distinctive of the Zeitgeist of the neoliberal era, which impacts significantly on the lives and subjectivities of individuals. This is the background against which the narratives of the feminist teachers are constructed as developed throughout the thesis and especially in chapter six. In addition, there are some other features of neoliberal societies identified by different authors that seem relevant. Neoliberal times are characterized by 'individualization and risk' as part of the 'late capitalism, late modernity or liquid society (Bauman 2007, Beck 1999, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim in Gill and Scharff 2011, 8).

In connection with the pervasiveness of neoliberalism, Sennett (1998, 2006) have also indicated that as part of neoliberal culture, institutions, 'short and erratic in their time frames, deprive people of a sense of narrative movement' (Sennett 2006, 183). In other words they have no sense of connection

between events and time, which is how experience accumulates (Sennett 2006, 183-84). This puts individuals as having 'no narrative agency'; lacking 'the power to interpret what is happening to them' (Sennett 2006, 188). Accordingly, he states that the new culture of capitalism requires a self who rejects past experiences, therefore is in opposition to what a person needs, which is a 'sustaining life narrative', where experiences are valued (1998, 5). This elaboration seems to me to be connected to Hobsbawm's (1994) identification of living in a 'permanent present', referring to the lack of connection between young peoples' contemporary experiences and that of earlier generations; 'young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in' (Hobsbawm 1994, 3).

Another characteristic of neoliberal times that I consider relevant regarding the narratives presented in the following chapters, are some beliefs linked to the meaning of politics nowadays. As Bauman (1999) explains, there are two contradictory widespread beliefs in western societies currently. One refers to the idea that we have already cleared up almost everything related to 'the case for human freedom'; and at the same time that there is nothing that people can do to change the way world affairs are being run, and that any effort is 'futile, even unreasonable'. For me, this is also part of the spirit of the neoliberal times and the dominant discourses available, which emphasize that there is no option to change the present system and that any challenge to it is not reasonable nor realistic. What is also interesting in Bauman's work is the connection between the broader conditions that he identified as the 'postmodern or liquid modernity' and the conditions of existence of individuals within it, which I found important regarding the constructions of subjectivities. Nevertheless, as it is developed through the following chapters and particularly in chapter six, the feminist teachers' narratives in this research are constructed against those mainstream beliefs and discourses, highlighting the resistance and critical stance of individuals despite the constraints and the spirit of neoliberal times. These feminist teachers construct a feminist subjectivity within those neoliberal discourses where it is perceived that feminism is 'old fashion' and that there is a widespread belief that there is no point in doing anything.

Feminism research has pointed out a link between neoliberalism and a postfeminist sensibility, as a main feature of media culture, specifically, and

of our culture in general (Gill 2007, Gill and Scharff 2011). This concept highlights the presence of two contradictory messages. On the one hand, disregarding feminists and feminist politics as old fashioned and anti feminine is part of the message that no woman would want to hold that position as it is not valued anymore in society. On the other hand, neoliberalism uses feminist ideas but to emphasise individualism, choices and lifestyle. They define this postfeminist sensibility as including,

...the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self surveillance, monitoring and self discipline; and a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference (Gill 2007, 147).

Consequently, this postfeminist sensibility 'constructs an articulation or seam between feminist and antifeminist ideas' and what is more interesting is that 'the grammar of individualism' that is used, 'fits perfectly with neoliberalism' (Gill 2007, 162). These issues are relevant in terms of the context and conditions under which subjectivity is constructed, something which media culture plays an increasing role in from the 90s onwards. As Gill (2007) states,

One of the things that makes the media today very different from the television, magazines, radio or press of the 1960s, 1970s and early 80s is that feminism is now part of the cultural field. That is feminist discourses are expressed within the media rather than simply being external, independent, critical voices (Gill 2007, 161).

In that sense, the neoliberal era could be characterized by the presence of this 'postfeminist sensibility', which affects the ways in which subjectivities are constructed. Others authors have pointed in similar directions. McRobbie (2011) stated the presence in popular and political culture of a 'sophisticated antifeminism', which at the same time both agrees with gender equality and denigrates the images of the feminist. Phipps (2014), researching on body politics, has addressed the challenges for contemporary feminism at a time of coalition between neoliberal and neoconservative political discourses.

The interpretations of what happened with feminism in the 1980s, 90s and onward is very controversial, as is the case with most of feminist history. The fragmentation and disappearance of feminism is a common and publicised

picture in the media especially. In order to understand what has been happening to feminisms under neoliberal times, I consider it useful to distinguish two different but imbricated issues, the diverse expressions of feminist movements and activism; and the context in which feminisms are operating which relates to the prevalent culture of postfeminist sensibility already mentioned (Gill 2007; Gill and Scharff 2011).

Regarding feminism as both movement and activism, during the 1980s the feminist movement put more emphasis on differences amongst women and the plurality of feminisms, including sometimes diverse and contradictory feminist projects. Feminist movements were going on with diverse expression as collectives, independent groups and campaigns. Some people talked about 'Women's movement' instead of 'Women's Liberation Movement'; and the suggestion of 'one unified feminism was deemed prescriptive and exclusionary' (Caine 1997, 269). Despite the persistence of feminist activism in different forms, the decade of the 80s is represented as a period of contraction and decline regarding the feminist movement because of the 'limited possibilities for change in the face of economic recession, conservative government, and social stagnation' (Caine 1997, 271).

Feminist politics was also brought into left and centre orientated political parties, trade unions, labour local councils, the Peace Movement, voluntary groups and collective actions linked to violence against women (Welch 2002; Caine 1997). In parallel, feminist mobilizations were present in different arenas. For instance, there was the antinuclear camp that began at Greenham Common in 1981; the movement of Women Against Pit Closures, in 1984; and the Shakti Women's Aid set up by the Black Women's Group in 1986 in Edinburgh, to mention some of the kind of feminist initiatives that were taken place in Britain during those year (British Library 2014). Regarding the pacifist movement, feminist politics had a great expression around the Greenham Common women's peace camp, which was very active during the 1980s and 90s. It mobilized thousands of women and men during those years. For instance, the 'Embrace the Base' campaign summoned 30,000 women who arrived at Greenham on 12 December 1982 to surround the nine miles of perimeter fence in order to protest. They also joined actions for instance with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, forming a human chain of 70,000 people uniting three nuclear bases on the first of April 1983 (<http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/>). There were also for

instance different local campaigns against pornography directed to newsagents in order 'not to display soft porn magazines or to restrict them to the top shelf'; and the Campaign against Pornography' was founded in 1989, at the same time as the Feminists against Censorship (Welchi 2002); once again showing the differing feminist positions regarding one topic.

In the case of the postwar generation teachers in this study, they were involved in feminist activism around the 1980s, including its link to the pacifist movement, supporting the wives of miners during the strikes in 1984, in antipornography campaigns, all as part of the groups of the feminist movement. Rosemund expressed that 'I went with my daughters to Greenham Common' as part of her feminist commitment. Similarly, Victoria, teaching in an area of miners' children, supported women's groups against pit closure. Esperanza, refers to similar activism by initiating a collective of women around that time and Gabriela and Andrea participated in the antipornography top shelf campaign.

There were also women that took feminist politics into higher education. During the 1970s and 1980s women's studies courses and programmes were established at universities, resulting in the recognition of women's studies as an interdisciplinary area of studies, which later on shifted to gender studies and the incorporation of critical research on masculinities (Charles 2015, 46). This progressive process of installing feminist women into academia has been researched by David (2014) acknowledging how they develop knowledge in order to understand and change issues about gender and social justice. Feminist theorization shifted its concerns from explaining universal women's subordination, to developing gender theory and later issues about intersectionality as part of a rising emphasis on women's differences. This has brought to the fore the diversity of feminisms regarding knowledge production and activism, which was always present, but not necessarily a pressing concern, as unity was privileged as a political strategy.

Regarding the feminist movement in the 1990s, there is a debate among scholars about how much feminism was fragmented, diversified and less visible than in other decades, especially in comparison with 1960s/70s feminisms (Dean 2010, Hemmings 2011). Wise (1996) indicated that the 'decline feminist thesis' operated exclusively regarding the 'WLM "overarching model of feminist activism"' (1996, 245). She characterized

feminist activism in the 90s as fragmented but not dead at all, with presence in 'relatively few single issue campaigns, no central formal organization structure, and an emphasis upon cultural, self help, education and 'lifestyle' forms of activism' (1996, 245). Her statement is based on a general typology of feminist activism in English feminist history that includes direct action, civil disobedience, pressure group politics, self help groups and organizations, cultural activities, education in a broader sense and lifestyle politics regarding more private values and practices (Wise 1996, 239-242). It has also been argued that, in the scenario of a backlash against feminism (Faludi 1992) and the advancement of a new postfeminist era (McRobbie 2009), a '3rd wave of feminism became to emerge' (Charles 2015, 45). This 'politics of performance' is associated with expression as 'Grrls power' and 'SlutWlaks' (Ibid). 'Grrls power', a form of feminism inspired in Punk culture and music and DIY activism, is known by the production of feminist zines, independent music and cultural events (Ibid). One of the neoliberal generation teachers in this research, Cyndi, participated in the feminist punk scene in England in the late 1990s, and later on got engaged in academic feminist activism. As a continuity from previous decades, in the 1990s there is a vibrant activity of feminists in British academia. As documented by David (2014, 2016a and 2016b various countries), Campbell (1992 in UK) and Skeggs (1995 in UK) cited by Pereira (2017, 87), there is an expansion of women, gender and feminist courses, programmes and initiatives. In that decade, gender and feminism 'had achieved a legitimate, if not inclusive, space and place' in academia (David 2016b, 148) despite 'institutional resistance' documented also by Pereira (2017, 165) in the case of Portugal.

Feminism from the 2000 onward seemed to have a resurgence in terms of activism and visibility. This is accompanied by the presence of new forms of activism using new technologies. Some examples of this expression are the 'F Word' webpage in 2001, created as a forum initially for young feminists and later for contemporary feminism (Dean 2010); Object, an organization to fight the 'pornification of culture' founded in 2003; the London Feminist Network established in 2004 and in 2010, came the emergence of UK Feminista. Diverse campaigns and marches have proliferated also as the march to end violence against women in 2010 and the 'No more Page 3' campaign in 2012, to mention some. Gabriela and Virginia, one postwar and

one neoliberal generation teacher, participated in this campaign along with other feminist events they engaged with.

As Walby (2011) indicates feminism has been challenged by the changing context from the 1980s onward by several processes. These processes refers to the mainstreaming of feminism as it engages with governments, the intersections of feminism with allies and competing forces in the civil society, and the intensification of the neoliberal context with the associated 'rise of inequalities and the shrinking of democratic spaces' (Walby 2011, 9-11). She states that feminism is 'alive and vibrant', but 'less visible than before' (the 1960s and 1970s), and this is 'partly because projects to reduce gender inequality less often label themselves as feminist, and partly because the form that feminism takes has been changing' (Walby 2011, 2). New ways of feminism have appeared, not following the form of a 'traditional social movement', and have permeated civil society and the state (Walby 2011, 2).

Despite not being part of the period analysed, is worth noting that after 2015 there is a strong presence of feminism in the UK and elsewhere. As a sample, in 2016, Caroline Criado Perez attracted thousands of signatures with her petition to put a statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament Square. By 2018, the statue had been installed to mark the centenary of women's suffrage in Britain (The Guardian 24 April 2018). Additionally, in 2017 'feminism' was Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year (Merriam-Webster 2018). In Chile in 2017, the women's movement succeeded in passing legislation that legalizes abortion under three cases (Global fund for women 2017).

Regarding education in the neoliberal era, England began a process of neoliberalisation from the 1980s onward. More specifically, the 1988 Education Reform Act inaugurated 'a regime of education marketisation' (Ranson 2008). This educational reform involved a set of reforms including for instance the establishment of a National Curriculum for public funded schools between age five and sixteen; the introduction of a national testing system (Standard Assessment Test) and as a consequence league tables for schools across Britain based on the exam results; and the option to have local management of schools by governing bodies (Royle 2012, 428-423). This meant 'mechanisms of choice and market competition' have been established allowing parents to choose schools with the logic of consumers, and schools to compete as service providers (Ranson 2008, 201). These

have involved the use of standardised examinations and the establishment of rankings between schools. This system 'has been growing in extension over a couple of decades [...] accentuating the constitution of neoliberal governance', with Conservative and Labour governments following similar policies (Ranson 2008, 204). The system that made Local Educational Authorities (LEA) 'responsible for the provision of all public education locally was gradually being dismantled' and replaced by schools 'locally managed but centrally funded and regulated' (Royle 2012, 428, 430). In 1992, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was established, which inspects schools on teaching and administrative issues. The predominance of a culture of accountability and monitoring has impacted on the ways education is undertaken, with the consequence of the 'narrowing of the purposes of schooling, with individual attainment on a range of core subjects becoming the overwhelming focus of policy and professional practices' (Lingard, Nixon and Ranson 2008, 204). What is also relevant in this process of neoliberalisation is that the provision of 'accounts of performance and service quality' have produced a 'regime of performativity' that is ensured from outside by 'regulations, controls and pressures' but also from 'inside out, colonising lives and producing new subjectivities'. This regime also 'generates identities disciplined by targets, indicators, measures and records of performance (Lyotard 1997, Ball 2001 in Ranson 2008, 5).

Conclusion

This chapter has given a general context for the narratives of my participants considering the times in which they grew up and lived. I have distinguished schematically between two eras, postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015), mirroring the distinction between my generations of teachers.

Regarding the postwar era, I presented the ideas of my participants that associated postwar times and especially the decades of the 1960s and 70s with optimism and hope. I documented the historical issues connected with these times, as the economic stability, the consolidation of a welfare state, the political and economic consensus built on those times, the advancement in terms of equality laws, the role of the unions as important social actors and the presence of social movements. I give special attention to several issues

related to the feminist movement that emerged around the 1960 and 70, indicating some characteristics, such as its way of organising based on local groups and consciousness raising. I have given some examples of how my participants experienced those times. I have also explored and developed some educational issues as they were an important part of my participants' narratives.

In relation to the neoliberal era, I have presented initially some insight from the data gathered out of the visual timeline and the group interview focused on neoliberal times. The topics highlighted there were the economic crisis and its consequences in the life of the participants, particularly related to their educational trajectories. I identified how feminism and politics was not an issue initially in their lives, but later on they became aware of these issues. Then I proceed to briefly characterize neoliberal Britain. It follows a section on what broadly neoliberalism as a phenomena means, that is to say its coverage of all spheres of lives, conceptualized as a form of governance, which has implication in terms of subjectivity constructions. I have also included other characteristics of neoliberal times as a culture that requires a self who rejects past experiences, who lacks connections between past and present, and where mainstream political beliefs are that there is nothing that is possible to change and that freedom has been achieved.

As part of neoliberal culture, I also develop what has been conceptualized as 'postfeminist sensibilities', which is understood as referring to discourses circulating with contradictory ideas about feminism. I have distinguished cultural features from the feminist movements present in this era that are varied and have taken different forms. Feminisms in the 1980s had strong expression linked to campaigns and specific causes, including its institutionalization in academia. Fragmentation has been indicated as a key characteristic of feminism under neoliberal times, despite nuances in these descriptions. I have also addressed educational issues in the neoliberal era, especially indicating changes in the educational system and the marketization process associated to the neoliberalisation of schools and teaching and how that impacted on the construction of identities.

I now move on to the next chapter to analyse specifically the links between biography and history. There, I illustrate through three narratives, how the construction of subjectivities unfolded in different ways. Particularly, I focus

on how my participants constructed their subjectivities in relation to significant events in time, specifically experiences with feminism and the patriarchy.

Chapter 4 Narratives, subjectivities and events in time

Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse three personal narratives in depth, which focus on early formative experiences through schooling, higher education and some events at the beginning of their teaching years or as adult women. Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia are part of my 'core narratives' and the findings here are the result of a thematic analysis with a narrative approach (see chapter two).

My first argument here is that subjectivities are constructed in a relational way (McLaren 2002), particularly, in relation to 'events in time', in both the postwar and neoliberal era. Through this I aim to connect biography, history, and social structures (Mills 2000). The events are not relevant in themselves. Rather the events are significant due to 'the interpretations the women made of them and the importance the women attached to these interpretations' (Middleton 1993, 68) in constructing their subjectivities. Events in time are conceptualized as meaningful experiences that my participants had, part of their biographies and the historical times in which they lived. Nevertheless, in order to enhance the comprehension of the narratives, I briefly refer to some meaningful 'encounters', despite them being the focal point of the next chapter (five). By 'encounters' I refer to 'significant women' that contributed to my participants' subjectivity formation. In this chapter, I concentrate on those events connected to diverse expressions of a) patriarchy or gender regimes and to b) feminisms as ideas and movements. Both concepts were defined in the introduction of the thesis.

A second argument refers to the kind of narratives that these women told. The narratives are constructed against different forms of patriarchy in both eras, arising from micro practices of resistance (see framework in chapter one) and constituting counter narratives. Counter narratives or 'counter discourses' or 'counter stories' are defined as 'discursive resistance' which

aimed to 'challenge and disrupt hegemonic framing of social realities' (McKenzie-Mohr and Lafrance 2014, 7). Here I analyse the counter narratives to patriarchal discourses of Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia. All of them have expressions of oppositional worldviews (hooks 2000) and resistance to patriarchal practices and discourses. In connection with this argument, I also sustain that their narratives are not the traditional masculine heroic narratives, as 'subjects are positioned as neither victims nor heroines but as agentic within constraints' (Stanley 2017, xiv). The narratives underline the structural constraints of the times in which they lived and the opportunities to exercise their resistance.

I selected the narratives of Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia because of their relevance in terms of showing the connection between early subjectivity constructions, biographical events and the postwar and neoliberal eras. The three narratives are different due to the diversity of paths Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia followed in constructing a feminist subjectivity regarding events in time. In addition, they are different in the complex way in which historical times influenced their lives. Their stories illustrate how the spirit of postwar and neoliberal eras is implicated in their subjectivities; highlighting the impact of social and feminist movements on their subjectivities; issues documented by feminist teachers in the USA (Weiler 1988, see chapter one for more details). This relates to how those social, cultural and political contexts were contributing to their initial awareness of gender differences.

Their narratives also illustrate how they addressed expressions of a patriarchal order that hindered their development as girls, teenagers and later as young women. These experiences of discrimination or marginality are considered grounding for women in order to develop feminist stances (Middleton 1989). The concrete expressions that gender discrimination took are different in the postwar and neoliberal eras. Nevertheless, there are commonalities that appeared in some cases, which refers the responses to those patriarchal practices. These experiences resulted in 'sensing wrongs' (Ahmed 2017) especially when girls or young women. I conceptualize it as 'protofeminism', a non articulated set of emotions that arose from sensing gender injustice. This concept was fully developed in the introduction and is used in this chapter. Additionally, I have also exposed differences between my participants from the postwar (i.e. Bridget and Gabriela) and my participant of the neoliberal generation (Virginia), regarding their ways of

constructing feminist subjectivities and their influences through time. This process, namely to develop feminist subjectivities, assumes a diversity of paths at different points in their lives (Hercus 2005), acknowledging the multiplicity in the construction of subjectivities (Atkins 2005; McLaren 2002) and the presence of the diversity of feminisms (Cain 1997).

The narratives are presented in an order that mirrored a kind of movement through the different eras. I begin with the early lives of Bridget and Gabriela in the 1960s and 1970s; then follow Gabriela's experiences in the 1980s when she went as a mature student to university; moving forward into the narrative of Virginia, who was born, schooled and began to teach in the neoliberal era. Initially, I examine how Bridget and Gabriela's narratives follow different routes, despite many commonalities. For instance, both are women of a working class Irish ascendancy, born in the postwar era, but their experiences with patriarchy and feminisms are different. I continue with the narrative of Virginia, part of the neoliberal generation, which shows a completely different experience with neoliberal expressions of patriarchy and in times of a postfeminist sensibility (Gill 2007). Each narrative is introduced with some key characteristics and is situated on a biographical timeline (see Figure 2, 3, 4). The biographical timelines identify some of the milestones in each case; their engagement in feminist issues, activism and the readings of women writers, activists or women in history. These last topics are developed in chapter five (readings linking to significant women) and chapter six (pedagogy and activism). It is important to bear in mind that this timeline was developed after the interviews in order to situate their stories, rather than created by the interviewees as explained in more detail in the methodology (see chapter two).

Figure 6 Core narratives used in chapter four

Pseudonym	Age	Class back-ground	Ethnicity	Teaching 1st/ 2nd profession	Years teaching	Working scheme	Place last school	Last School Type	Last Position	Union Roles (past/ present)	Date Interview
Bridget	59	Working class	White British (mix)	1st	36	Retired from FT	North England	Secondary	Teacher	Member Representative	2013/15
Gabriela	65	Working class	White British (mix)	2nd	15	Retired from PT	South England	Secondary	Teacher	Member	2013/15
Virginia	31	Middle class	White British	1st	8	PT (before FT)	London	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher, Head of Depart.	Member	2015/16

Legend:	Postwar generation
	Neoliberal generation

Bridget's narrative of struggle, facing patriarchy outside the home and feminism from early on.

When I first interviewed Bridget in November 2013, she was 59 years old and on leave because of stress and health issues. By the 2nd interview in early 2015 she was retired from 37 years teaching. She had had difficult times with educational leadership who privileged 'hard masculinities' (Blackmore 1999) and adhered to gendered 'new managerialism' (Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012), specifically with a new appointed Head of Department. According to Bridget's words, 'a young man out to make his reputation' who was 'quite a bully' and harassed her. She had spent her whole teaching career in one school and began to teach in 1977. She self identified as feminist and told a story of activism inside and outside her union. She grew up in postwar times in the north of England, in a working class household of Irish immigrants.

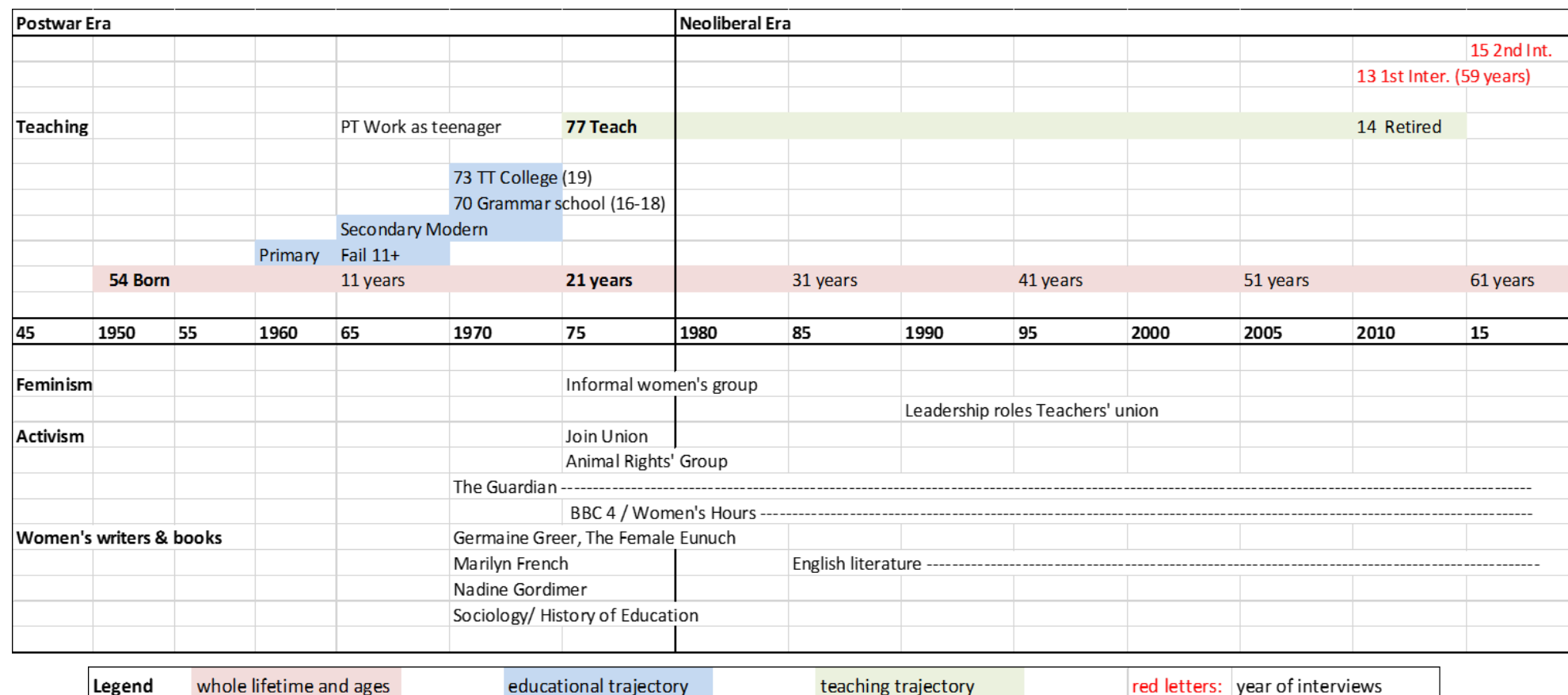
Bridget's journey as a girl, woman, teacher and feminist has been reconstructed in a narrative of struggles against patriarchal practices and discourses. Her story, told in neoliberal times, started in the postwar era. Her narrative, as she elaborated and I reconstruct it, sheds light on how a feminist subjectivity is constructed and moulded by biography and history. Her upbringing in an unprivileged family pushed her forward to improve her life conditions highlighting the role of education. She experienced gender discrimination outside her home of origin, issues that prompted 'sensing wrongs' (Ahmed 2017) and experienced the presence of a protofeminism in her girlhood. Her awareness of a patriarchal order in society began in her school days and later on as a young woman. At the same time, she mentioned the presence of feminism in postwar England, especially during the 1960s and 70s.

I argue that Bridget's narrative is at the same time both typical and atypical of a working class girl of the postwar generation in England. Like many working class children of that generation, she failed the '11 plus' exam. Similar to many girls of the time, she also had to deal with different expressions of patriarchal order such as gender discrimination and violence. In contrast to other working class girls in the late 1960s, she managed to go to a grammar school to do her 'A levels', after completing her 'O level' exams in her secondary modern school (see Figure 7 Bridget's Biographical timeline). Then she progressed onto Teacher Training College. She and her

sister were the first in her family to go into higher education. From her teen years she began to construct an alternative pathway in terms of the prescribed positions for girls and women as examined below. She experienced similar social movement to the one of feminist working class academics, and so can be seen as part of 'successful female class shifters' (Hey 2006, 301). These transformations involved not only economic autonomy, but also decision making autonomy (Kabeer 2001), as for instance her option not to have children.

Bridget's narrative has some characteristics of struggle and transformation that are similar to 'modernist stories' defined as a journey that starts with suffering, followed by struggles and arriving at an outcome (Plummer 1995, 54-55). Bridget highlighted her difficult starting point as a working class girl and what she had overcome. This contrasted with the path of her mother and other girls of her generation, whose identities were constructed around being wives and mothers. Nevertheless, I also argue that this is not an 'epic or heroic' narrative in the classical masculine sense because she was aware and has faced many enduring challenges in the neoliberal era as developed in chapter six. She also constructed a narrative in relation to the presence of feminism as analysed here and in relation to other women as stressed in chapter five. In that sense, she constructed a relational subjectivity which connected to others and was not separate to them. This made her narrative closer to postmodern or 'late modernist stories' (Plummer 1995).

Figure 7 Bridget's biographical timeline



Bridget grew up in the late 1950s onwards, in an underprivileged household. She described this as, 'we were at the bottom of the ladder, from a very poor family'. Her mother worked as a 'live in domestic servant' before marriage and took care of the home and children after; her father was a 'Navy' (a labourer digging the roads). Both 'were ill educated', nevertheless, she was encouraged to study if she 'didn't want that sort of life'. For her parents and later for herself, education was an instrument for social mobility as she described, 'education was always prized because they knew it was the way out of poverty and all the rest of it. My sisters and I were always encouraged to do two things, go to church and do well at school'. Looking retrospectively, Bridget reflects on her schooling years and the difficulties she had to overcome. She faced discrimination by class, gender and ethnicity. She made clear the way working class children were treated and the low expectations people had for them in the 1960s and early 1970s. She explained how the educational system discriminated against them through the '11 plus', an exam that 'was biased by class' according to her and scholars (Royle 2012; Black 2010; Ranson 2008; see also chapter three). As she states, '80% of the children in the country were just pushed to one side because they were expected to go and work in the factories, the mills and docks; all the manual labour and the low grade jobs. So, that is how things were!' She also compares herself with other children in the same cohort at school and stresses the different path she and her sisters took.

They [children] all settled for leaving school at 14 or 15 and just getting a job. Not a career, just a job, as you could in those days, [...] Out of my whole class at school [sec. modern], there was only myself and a boy who became teachers. Most people didn't have any vision; they had no idea that if they wanted to do things they could have worked hard and achieved.

In her narrative, Bridget not only highlights her starting point as a working class child, but also as a girl; she brings to the front gendered dimensions in her early formative experiences. She only realized that being a 'woman' could be a disadvantage when confronted with the world outside her home, 'It is only when I went out into the world that I realised that being a woman, female, a girl [was something] that in some people's view should hold me back. So it was quite a shock to me!' Her surprise regarding what people expected from women could be understood because the strong image she

had of women, as her mother 'was a powerful force in the house' despite her domestic role; she had only older sisters and her father was a 'weak figure'.

Facing patriarchal gendered expectations stands out in her memories when she confronted peers, teachers and people in general. She recalled several incidents at her school and in the part time work she had, where she realized what discourses circulated about girls, 'you just weren't expected to achieve anything'. People used to make fun of her when she continued studying for the exams, as if it was something foolish to do as 'there were plenty of jobs'. These were the times of full employment (Hobsbawm 1994), as developed in chapter three. Teachers also had no expectations of her and her sisters at secondary school, 'a lot of teachers still never really thought that we would sit the exams and passed'. She also mentions incidents regarding her peers, where boys used to say things like 'if you stay on for your exams and go and become a teacher, nobody will want to marry you. You'll be lonely'. But she resisted those ideas, she did not agree, she thought if she had 'a good job', she does not 'need a man'. This quote reflects what happened to professional women in those times, as 'women who were successful in their careers quite often were single because you have to give up your job'. Until the 1960s 'marriage bars' were present in several professions including teaching⁵.

In addition to gendered expectations, Bridget had experienced gender discrimination and violence at school and in workplaces, illustrating how widespread patriarchal practices were. Sexual harassment was accepted as normal, as she said, 'the kind of sexual assault that went on all the time without it being acknowledged; men fooling about with [women]'. For instance she remembered 'being mauled by the boys' at the secondary modern school she was at; 'they weren't serious sexual assaults [but] they would be called sexual assaults now'. As a teenager, she did not think of the actions as inappropriate or something to be reported, as the quote illustrates,

They [boys] would try to grope you, put their hands out and touch you. [...] There was a long path before you actually got to the school buildings and you always tried to walk with a girl or a group of girls because if you were the only girl then, some of the boys would try to put their hand up your skirt and that sort of thing. You never

⁵ <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/marriage-and-civil-partnership>

thought of telling anybody! It never occurred to any of us to say anything about it! We just took it.

These events show how patriarchal practices were present in several places in the postwar era, despite feminism becoming more audible the 1960s and 70s. Added to those experiences, Bridget was aware of ethnic discrimination remarking that 'In my parents' day, Irish people were often the butt of discrimination - no Blacks, no dogs, no Irish - was seen on notices displayed in pubs and boarding houses. Jokes about thick Irish were plentiful until the mid-90s'. All these experiences of discrimination regarding gender, class and ethnicity that she lived through were elaborated later in her life and instilled in her ideas about social justice that she pushed forward in her worldviews and politics as a teacher and activist.

As a girl, Bridget's reactions to patriarchal gendered expectations, gender discrimination and violence towards women were of surprise and constituted a lack of understanding of what was happening, but 'sensing wrong' (Ahmed 2017). She was not able to articulate her feelings or to argue with people, she was voiceless, and therefore I contend she had a protofeminist subjectivity as a girl. This bewilderment is something Bridget has in common with other women in this research. As a girl, Bridget was clear upon her position; she rejected those practices. For instance, she did not 'like that attitude' regarding people making jokes about her preparing for exams. As illustrated from the beginning of her story, she had to struggle with, overcome and go against those discriminations and mainstream patriarchal discourses about women during the postwar era. These micro resistant acts and protofeminism developed through her everyday life experiences was beginning to take form and be part of her subjectivity during her early years.

As described before, Bridget failed the '11 plus' exam, as did many other working class girls and went to a secondary modern school. Nevertheless, at that school there were 'O level exams', and she followed the path traced by her older sisters who undertook the exams. She and her sisters changed then to a Grammar school and continued studying and all of them became professionals. Her sisters played a key role regarding her educational trajectory in conjunction with other family influences already mentioned. She explained her experiences as follows,

It was unusual for Secondary Moderns to offer these exams, as they were normally the preserve of the Grammar school. Maybe the fact that the school was Roman Catholic is relevant, I don't know. Also, the '11 plus' was being seen as outmoded as the comprehensive school movement was making its voice heard. My sister, who is seven years older than me, was in the first cohort to stay on at our school to take O levels. My other sister also stayed on for O levels.

Bridget's story shows how she escaped a working class woman's destiny in terms of doing unskilled work or preparing for marriage and motherhood. Despite having failed the '11 plus', having to deal with patriarchal gender expectations and difficulties; she took an alternative pathway. As expressed in the following quote, she avoided the mainstream social mandates for girls and women,

The girls were going to be typists and the boys would go and work in the mills and the factories [...]. They said we are meant to do these sorts of things and my sisters and I sort of went... Ah! But we can do that [be a professional] if we want too, if we try. You have to have that ambition and somebody has to help you have that ambition.

For Bridget, the Grammar School impacted positively in her life, involving challenges to her beliefs, cultural and social background. For her, there she accessed a 'different world'. This means being in contact with a different gendered culture, different worldviews and values, people from different class backgrounds and the access to material and social resources. She expressed that education 'can widen experience because it gives you confidence [...] to do more things and to meet different people, because [...] you need confidence to meet people from different parts of society. British society is very class orientated'. There, Bridget began to read newspapers and books in the school library; was taken to the theatre, cinema and museum; there she felt free from sexual harassment in comparison to her former school years, 'you could walk down the corridor and every girl was safe'. Probably gender discrimination existed in other forms that Bridget did not realize or remember, or it is possible to suggest she even could have had an idealized memory of her grammar school. Bridget highlighted the point when she began to challenge gender issues. For instance, when studying English Literature she started 'questioning things', reflecting on her own life as a girl and a woman, 'why should she have to do what that man said? Why

should she have to do what her father told her? And you could start questioning things. If you question things in a novel or a play, you question them in your own life'. This quote shows her reflections on gendered expectations from early on.

Another meaningful event Bridget recalled relates to her participation in a debating club at the Grammar school, one of the 'light bulb moments' she had in developing gender awareness. The debate was about equal pay between men and women and she was arguing for women. A 'new female teacher' brought the topic into the school (it was not part of the curriculum). This event illustrates the presence and influence of feminism in the 1970 as equal pay was on the Women's Liberation Movement agenda (see chapter three). It also illustrates her protofeminist subjectivity and the pervasiveness of patriarchal discourses. It is indicative of feminist influences as the debate on equal pay was present in the public arena and was 'topical' in her words. Furthermore, it shows how some female teachers were influenced by feminism and women's struggles; and how they were pushing things forward by giving a space for that debate at school and between pupils. However, although feminist and patriarchal discourses were confronted at those times, patriarchal practices were still mainstream, as shown in the fact that the position of 'no equality' wins the debate, showing the power position from which the boy talked as a male, and the acceptance of that view by the other girls. The views of pupils reflected the society in general, discrimination against women was a normalized expression of the patriarchal order.

There must have been something in the papers about the equal pay act, [...], so it was topical. The debate was that women should be paid the same as men for the same job. I wanted to speak in favour of that. I went to the library, no internet then ... [looked at] all the reasons why women should be paid the same as men and I said my piece. And this boy stands up and said "well, I don't think the women should be paid the same as men because they are women, and they shouldn't be working anyway, they should be at home having babies and cooking the tea for the man coming home from work". And I thought oh! Everyone voted for him! The GIRLS voted for the boy who said that you shouldn't have equal pay! I thought, crikey!

This meaningful event explains how Bridget was trying to have a voice, she 'wants to speak' in favour of women's rights; she is looking for the arguments to build up her feminist subjectivity, she is reflecting on and challenging

gender discrimination and she is expressing an opinion against mainstream beliefs. In other words, she is resisting patriarchy, another pattern in my respondents' narratives. Another woman, her teacher, using her power and legitimacy, opened a space to make her voice heard, although the social context in which she was in, was not really able to listen, there is no 'interpretative community' and the 'hearability' and 'tellability' of her story depend on that (Plummer 1995). This shows the need to listen (Back 2013), the complexity of how gender subordination operates, and how personal change is linked to social change at different levels. Still, she had no explanation as a teen for that; she still had no feminist framework to make sense of it yet. She simply was 'sensing being wronged' (Ahmed 2017). But interestingly, she elaborates her narrative in relation to women's struggles, which is a pattern in both hers and other narratives of this research, as is developed in chapter five. Additionally, Bridget's view of her educational experiences and where it took her crystalize in the expression she used of an 'Educating Rita moment'⁶. She highlighted the process of distancing from her background due to her educational trajectory and her working class origin. She expressed it as follows,

If you are not from the higher social classes, or higher social strata, education takes you away from your roots. It takes [you] away from your family, out of your friendship groups and the area that you live in and it can be seen as being divisive. It is that 'Educating Rita' moment.

This process of estrangement began at the Grammar school and continued later on. She distances herself from her origins, as she said 'I very much moved out of my background'. This means changes in her values and worldviews; and also in her ideas about women. She distanced herself from her class, from her Catholic tradition, as she said 'religion doesn't play any part in my life really now'. All these processes imply several transformations, both changes in values, and more importantly for this research, in her subjectivity.

Later on, in 1973, Bridget went on to attend a Teacher Training College (TTC) as part of the expansion of educational welfare policies and continuing

⁶ This refers to a play and film popular in 1980's England that portrays a working class woman who went to university as a mature student and became challenged and changed by that experience.

the historical input of women in the teaching profession in England. Teaching was gendered already, as it was an acceptable path for middle class women and they were the majority at the TTC, around 70% of the women (Dyhouse 2006) as presented in chapter three. She was determined to continue studying and used the opportunities available for her. As she expressed it, 'I just followed in my sister's footsteps', who was the 'first in the family' (David 2014) to go to higher education. It was within her horizon of possibilities, as it was also a Catholic institution. Universities, according to her, were for 'the boys' and some girls from higher classes. This illustrates her awareness of class and gender issues in terms of moulding her educational opportunities as a working class girl in postwar times, as developed in the following quote,

If I'd have had more confidence, I would have gone to University, [...] and nobody else in the family had been to University. Whereas, somebody had been to this particular college. There were also far fewer University places available in the 70's; and at this selective grammar school, something like a good 50% went to training colleges or colleges of education [...] because teaching was the first choice of many of the sixth form, it was really the boys who went on to University and a few girls who were the absolute *crème de la crème*. University education wasn't as widely available as it is today.

Women's struggles is a topic that appears again in her narrative when referring to her early teaching years. Bridget recalled an event related to the struggles of female teachers to get promoted in the late 1970s. I read this event as a sign of the presence of feminism at that time. As stated by Bridget, male staff generally accepted gender discrimination in terms of salary and pay and expressions of patriarchal discourses at the workplace. Bridget and a group of likeminded young female colleagues who shared these concerns began pressuring for changes to improve their situation, in collaboration with the union. Once more, she told her story within the wider context of women's struggles, connecting her situation with women in the past. She mentioned when women teachers have been granted equal pay (1956), and the Equal Pay Act (1970) (see context chapter three). She called attention to the fact that schools were male dominated in senior positions.

Some of the older men teachers, when I started teaching in 1977, they didn't like women having equal pay, [...] promotion would always go to men. [...] there was an informal network of women in the school who met and said you know this isn't fair [...]. So, we

looked at the distribution of promotion within the school and we were able to say, of the people paid more money; 99%, 80%, 85% were men, and the only women who had promotion would be in a role specifically dealing with girls. So there would be a deputy head looking after girls' welfare. [...] There was almost a form of silent agreement with management that when a promotion came up it went to the men. Always! Then if you asked they would say things like, well you know he has just got married or his wife is having a baby, so they really need the money. So, things were always looked at from a male point of view and it took a lot to change that.

Summarising, all the meaningful events highlighted in Bridget's narrative contributed to the construction of her feminist subjectivity. Events in postwar times, especially during the 1960s and 70s impacted on her as a girl and young woman. She started with the feeling of 'something wrong', referred to as 'a protofeminism', which later on developed as a feminist stance. On the one hand, she experienced diverse expressions of patriarchy in postwar times such as gendered expectations and gender discrimination. On the other hand, she lived amidst the influences of 1970's feminisms in her school years and later when she began to teach. In addition, her narrative shows individual micro resistance to patriarchal practices and the construction of a narrative against it, a counter narrative to patriarchy. Bridget initially experimented with having a voice against patriarchal discourses as a teenager and later on as a young woman joining other likeminded teachers to defend female teachers' rights. She developed a feminist consciousness and framework that allows to link her experiences with women's experiences in general, connecting the personal and political. Nevertheless, this process of subjectivity construction is not only influenced by events in her early life. There are also significant women that contributed to her 'becoming' as a being, which is a topic addressed further in chapter five. Furthermore, this process continued all through her life, as is developed in chapter six especially regarding teaching and activism in neoliberal times. I now move on to consider Gabriela's narrative, which despite of a similar working class and Irish background, followed a different path in comparison to Bridget's.

Gabriela's narratives of feminist optimism, facing patriarchy inside home as a girl and feminism later on as an adult.

Gabriela is the oldest of my interviewees; she was 65 years and retired from teaching when I first interviewed her in 2013. She is part of the postwar generation of teachers, from a working class background, 'half Irish', and has lived through both eras (postwar and neoliberal). Her upbringing took place in a patriarchal family in the 1950s, in the south of England. She failed the '11 plus' exam, went to a secondary modern school and ended her schooling at 16. Then she went to London to work in a period of full employment, enjoying the freedom of the 1960s and 70s. She married around the 1970s and had two children. Surrounded by the 'spirit' of the time, she was politicized through the pacifist movements and later became involved with feminism in the 1980s. She attended university as a mature student and later in the 1990s, she became a teacher when she was in her 40s. She taught part time for more than 15 years in the neoliberal era.

Gabriela's narrative illustrates how her feminist subjectivity is constructed in a different way, following a different path compared with Bridget and Virginia regarding 'events in time'. This means that her subjectivity construction is influenced by events that link to feminism and patriarchy at different historical times, through a more diverse expression of them (feminism and patriarchy); and at different moments in her life course. First, she experienced patriarchy very directly and intimately in her home of origin, something Bridget and Virginia had not had. Then, later on as an adult she faced gender discriminatory procedures as a married woman, an expression of the patriarchy at a macro level. Regarding feminism, the core meaningful events in the formation of her subjectivity occurred later on in her life as an adult woman, in contrast to Bridget and Virginia. She became involved with 1980's feminism through antipornography campaigns and academic feminism as a mature student encountering diverse expressions of feminism compared with the forms lived by the other two women. It is interesting that she follows a different path from Bridget, despite the fact both were part of the Postwar generation, have failed the '11 plus' exam and shared an Irish and working class background. This shows how the concept of generation does not necessarily give an account of the complexity and plurality of the ways in which subjectivities are impacted by experiences and events in time. In the

case of Gabriela, her subjectivity construction followed a different path as she encountered patriarchy early on with her father and experienced 1980s feminism later on as an adult woman. This contrasted significantly with Bridget's influences of 1970s feminism in her teen years and as young woman.

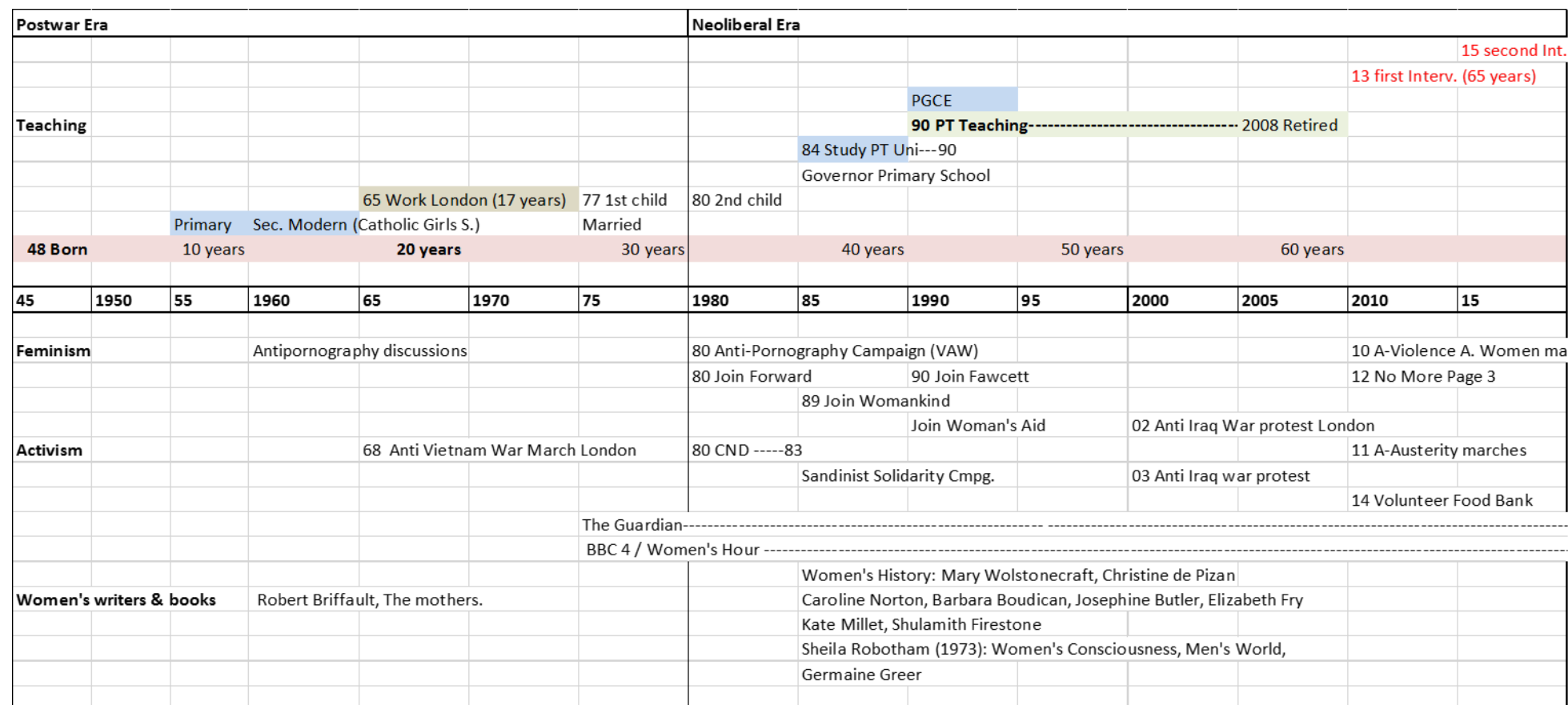
Notwithstanding, they share in their trajectories two changes, one of class mobility or class shift (Hey 2006), and one in terms of a woman's position. Their narratives are about realization and attainments as women coming from working class backgrounds. Gabriela changed her position as a woman in comparison to that of her mother -a working class woman without a job outside of the home and who remained under the authority of her husband. This generational change in a woman's position is similar to Bridget. In addition, Gabriela and Bridget also shared a Catholic upbringing, but both left religion behind. Gabriela explicitly challenged gender inequalities inside the church and ended abandoning the church because of her feminism.

In addition, all through Gabriela's narrative I found several events that show the way she elaborated a feminist subjectivity against diverse expressions of patriarchy. In her early years, she argued against her patriarchal father, despite not having an articulated stance. As an adult woman, she developed her feminism when becoming a feminist mother for her children, then getting involved in campaigns against predominantly patriarchal practices such as pornography and finally articulating her position academically through her studies. Therefore, I argue that she constructed a counter narrative to patriarchy, similarly to the other feminist teachers in this research. She resisted patriarchal discourses in postwar and neoliberal times through micro politics.

For Gabriela, the events that she lived through in these historical times are central to what she became. She highlighted the opportunities that the welfare state opened up for her as a working class woman. In addition, her worldviews and her values about women and society are influenced by that era; in the sense that society, social justice and gender equality are part of a collective project in which the state has a role to play. The historical times in which she was 'fortunate' to live contribute to her sense of fulfilment as a person and as a feminist. Based on that, she constructed a narrative of emancipation, attainment and enjoyment as a woman. Although it is not a

heroic narrative in the traditional sense that she had overcome everything by herself; her circumstances gave her opportunities that she decisively took. In her view, it is 'only by chance' that she had lived in these 'wonderful times'. A time when 'this country changed and it was a window of opportunity for women, girls of my generation, of my class' and 'the best time ever, ever, ever in this country to have been working class'! All the events in time related by her were crucial in contributing to what she came to be in terms of her feminist subjectivity. She defines this progressive and optimistic time as allowing her flourishing, 'How lucky is that, you know, I got an education, I was able to do anything basically I wanted, nothing stopped me'! Then she continued later on telling how terrible it would be in other conditions, 'I don't know how somebody like me would have survived in a more repressive time for both women and the working class. That would have been absolutely dreadful. So, I have lived in wonderful times'. Accordingly, Gabriela's narrative despite being also a narrative of transformation as was Bridget's, has a different tone, more optimistic and celebratory of the times she lived in and her feminism. Her narrative is full of joy and 'a tremendous sense of gratitude'. This does not mean that she believes gender equality has been achieved; on the contrary she is very aware of the challenges girls and women continue to face under neoliberalism.

Figure 8 Gabriela's biographical timeline



Legend whole lifetime and ages educational trajectory other work trajectory teaching trajectory red letters: year of interviews

One of the meaningful events in Gabriela's narrative relates to her upbringing. Unlike Bridget and Virginia, she experienced gender discrimination inside her home of origin, having a patriarchal father who was authoritarian and dismissive of her, her mother and sister. She had these feelings of rage and injustice and 'sensing wrongs' (Ahmed 2017), already mentioned in the case of Bridget, but in Gabriela's experience these were triggered by events inside her home of origin. This early 'gut awareness' (Jaggar 1996 cited by Ahmed 2017) is a starting point in building a subjectivity against gender discrimination, a protofeminist subjectivity, which also contributes from early on to her elaboration of a counter narrative to patriarchy. This protofeminist subjectivity and those sensations of not being able to understand what was happening prompted her to search for explanations; and she went to the library and found Briffault's book, '*The Mothers, The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins*', which told her an alternative story of women. Later on in her life, Gabriela would go back to books and women's stories to make sense of her life as a woman, as developed in chapter five. This early act in search of knowledge is part of her efforts to resist patriarchy from early on, trying to defend her position and trying to articulate an oppositional stance. This was despite the fact that she had no name for what was happening to her particularly from her position of limited power as a child. Looking back, she expressed as follows,

My father was a very domineering person, a very patriarchal figure. He ruled the roost. It was his way or the highway, and my mother's opinion was never asked of and never respected; and if she did voice an opinion, she was always talked down, undermined all the time by my father who... He was very dismissive of anything she said and myself and my sister, I am the oldest girl and I seethed with this injustice and I was always very argumentative with my father, challenged him and I just in my heart I knew this was wrong, the way they were behaving and I wanted my mother to stand up for herself.

Because of her experiences at home she decided from early on to distance herself from the gender roles in her family of origin and from her father's worldviews as a 'working class tory' as she said, 'I knew I wanted to get out of my class. I did not want what my parents had. I wanted more, a better life'. In addition, at school she was discriminated by her Irish working class accent, and therefore decided 'to speak differently'. These experiences of discrimination marked her from early on and developed in her a sense of

social justice, common among my participants and significantly documented regarding feminist educators and activists (Hercus 2005; Middleton 1993; Weiler 1988).

The beginning of her educational trajectory is similar to many working class girls in the 1960s; she failed the '11 plus' exam and went to a secondary modern school. Nevertheless, unlike Bridget, she had a good experience there, in an all girl's Catholic school. She challenged things in her school and came out of it feeling 'confident as a person'. In her narration, looking back, she is aware of the structural constraints as a working class girl, but also stressed the micro resistance she was able to exercise as a girl, which contributed to building a protofeminist subjectivity. As she expressed, 'I did rather well out of my determined position there, I became a big fish in a little pool; I became Head Girl of that school. But the academic aspirations were not very much.

This way of narrating her life shows how she does not position herself as either a victim, or as a heroine. She told her story as a protagonist, similar to the progressive women that Casey (1993) researched who were 'authors of their own lives'. She is aware of the structural issues but also had exercised her agency, initially through small acts of resistance in the 'little territories of the everyday' (Rose 1999).

After finishing secondary school at age 16, Gabriela went straight to work, in contrast to Bridget and Virginia. Coming from a working class household, having a mother who only worked at home and a father that needed to do 'extra time to earn a decent salary', there were no expectations on her about further studies, as she expressed, 'I didn't go to university then. There was no talk of university in my school or my family'. She moved to London to work aged 17 in 1965. She lived there in a 'Golden Age' of England in London, as a single woman, having economic independence, enjoying that freedom and the growing youth culture and prosperity of the city. As she indicates,

I did get a job [...] I lived in Central London which was another enormous factor of good luck because in those days someone like me, who had just a regular job, [...] and I didn't have a degree but I could live in a very fashionable part of London even then, share a house with other people, no problem finding the money. Nowadays you couldn't possibly live [there], it's so expensive, [...] it was just

gorgeous. [...] Jobs were easy to come by, if you left a job on Friday you get another one on Monday.

And she added later,

I was young when it was THE place to be, London in the 1970's, was the place to be! I took all the opportunities that it offered to be happy and to be joyous and free and it was brilliant! And with feminism attached to that, perfect!

It was the time of the peace movement, social mobilizations, people putting forward ideas of social justice and challenging the state and society through social movements, including the feminist movement that was becoming more visible and widespread. However, for Gabriela, global politics was the first issue at that time, 'I became sort of politicised about the Vietnam War and that leads to the wars in South America which included the Sandinistas in Nicaragua'. She actively participated in solidarity campaigns on those topics. Later on, she confronted gender discrimination again when married and with children. Despite the presence of feminist movements and progressive ideas in the late 1970s, Gabriela again faced patriarchal practices. Gender discriminations came to the fore in everyday life. For instance, she refers to gender discriminatory practices that some companies had. This and other incidents illustrated how she integrated those experiences in the construction of her subjectivity, linking them with her past experiences of patriarchy in her home of origin. In the quote below she explained her views,

They wanted my husband's signature for the delivery for something in the house to sign for. I thought to myself, hang on a minute, I am the one who lived on my own, paid my rent and pay my bills and you are telling me you need my husband's signature on this? What are we living? In the 20th century! Are we living in the 20th century or not? I couldn't believe that these things happened. Then of course I realised that a woman couldn't get a mortgage for her own property without getting a husband's or father's signature. My eyes became open by these personal experiences and then I started sort of reading and then my university studies encapsulated this thing about hunter gatherers and gatherer hunters and how history has been turned on its head and it hides women's achievements from history and so the whole thing became bigger and bigger and bigger!! And I realize that... I have always been a feminist in my heart, before I knew the word. As a child I was a feminist, when I saw how my mother and father behaved with one another. That started me. That was when the issues around feminism interested me. I was always aware of gender issues.

This quote shows how she connected her experiences as an adult woman with her experiences as girl, linking different times in her narrative. Moreover, her protofeminism is expressed when she stated 'I have always been a feminist', despite not having articulated it as a girl. In addition, her reading and studies at university in the 1980s helped her to put it all together. Her educational experiences provided 'frameworks to connect [her] lives with the structural context' similar to what Middleton (1989, 67) found with feminist educators and that Hercus (2005) called 'feminist frames'. Gabriela was able to articulate and put a name to her views and ongoing interest, linking the personal and the political.

Another event that Gabriela mentioned as important in her narrative regarding the experiences of feminism is when she got involved with antipornography campaigns, as a Catholic school girl initially, and later on in the 80s as an adult woman. Her activism on this topic is one of the expressions of her feminism and part of her feminist subjectivity construction. She took part in these campaigns individually, through several different actions, under the umbrella of an organization, as she related,

I was always involved in the fight against pornography from the earliest time. Because I could see where it was leading and would lead to pornography with children, paedophiles; and of course, that is what has happened, sexual slavery and that sort of things is pandemic. [...] One of the FAWCETT things that I did was to challenge the top shelf magazines, in shops like WH Smith in this country; they often have pornographic magazines [...]. The Page Three Campaign against the Sun. I would challenge garages where they sell them, by putting newspapers in front or put little leaflets in the front of them saying we object to this and challenged people in the garage where the queue was to buy food as well. [...] And the next time I did it, [...] they said, [...] if you want to do anything write to this address and I did write to that address but it was not against the law. They were more powerful but I did challenge them.

As Gabriela expressed in a former quote, it was a set of events that brought back her interest in women's issues; certain experiences, her reading and later the acquiring of academic knowledge accessed at university. In the mid-80s, when her second child was in primary school, she went to study at university as a part time mature student. This was the time in which 'second wave' feminism got incorporated in English universities through Women's Studies and/or special modules on gender and women's studies (David

2014). With her studies, Gabriela discovered the stories of significant women 'that changed my [her] life', a topic developed further in chapter five. She realised how women's contributions had been deleted from history and she became 'grounded in feminism'. Her studies allowed her to link her experiences with what happened to other women and what happened to women in history. She constructed her feminist subjectivity in relation to the stories of women in the past and evaluated her present taking into account those experiences. Through her academic feminism she was able to articulate her standpoint and realized that she has 'always been a feminist'. In that sense, the articulation of her feminism is something that came later on in her life and takes on a clearer form through her academic learning in her 40s. Therein she found a framework to articulate her early experiences as a girl and as an adult woman, as she said,

Part of my university studies took in women's issues and feminism and I started reading a lot of academic books from the women of the 'second wave' feminist movement, American women, British women and I became completely grounded in feminism and realised that I had been right all my life. [...] I learnt a lot about women in the past which informed [...] my life basically as a feminist woman. [...] It really did confirm everything that I hoped but didn't actually know.

Here we see how her studies have fed and reaffirmed her feminism which is similar to the account given by Middleton who argued with regard to feminist educators, that university studies provided a 'framework to construct their lives within a structural context that results in connecting the personal with the political' (1989, 67). This academic knowledge allowed her to understand and make sense of her former experiences. Furthermore, it inspired her activism by knowing about women in history who fought for women's rights.

Regarding the times in which Gabriela lived, she highlighted the postwar era not only for what it allowed in her past, but also because her narrative is embedded by the Zeitgeist of that time. Her ideas and worldviews highlight the social and the role of the state regarding 'a civilised society'. Her narrative is not constructed following a neoliberal 'political and economic rationality' (Gill and Scharff 2011). She does not believe that 'the case of human freedom' is resolved, nor that 'there is little we can change' (Bauman 1999); both typical characteristics of the neoliberal Zeitgeist (see context chapter three). On the contrary, her feminist politics highlight the need for changes

and the prevalence of gender inequalities, especially in neoliberal times, stating 'I'll carry on fighting the good fight'. Similarly to the other feminist teachers in this research, her concept of social justice is her link to her feminism. However, in her case she stressed the connection with the welfare state and its fundamental role regarding equality. During her narrative, she celebrates the welfare state and the different ways in which she benefited from welfare policies as a working class woman. For instance, she highlights her experiences as a mother with the NHS and the opportunity to study as a mature student thanks to educational welfare policies still available in the 1980s. Social justice issues has been an ongoing preoccupation in her life, which is part of her narrative of micro resistance not only in the past, but also in the neoliberal era, as illustrated in the following,

I've always been concerned with society and the economics of the situation, political power, the politics of it, who gets power and what they do with it and what does it mean to live in a civilised society, with a health service free for all, a living wage; not repressing the working classes so that they live in despair and poverty; housing, the basic things basically, which are under threat now.

She added also,

I'm very happy to still go on about women's rights, issues of justice; we still have the pay gap. I'm very interested always in that. [...] Listening to politicians who endlessly let us down, including the women [politicians] who don't really fight for these things, childcare... [...] I have always been feminist. It has been a wonderful journey for me and I'm still proud and pleased to be on the journey of feminism.

Summarizing, Gabriela has constructed her feminist subjectivity in relation to events in time such as the immediacy of patriarchy within her family of origin, an encounter again as an adult and married woman of gender discriminations, and then engagement in 1980s feminism through campaigns and academic feminism. Her path is different from Bridget's despite having in common their Irish ascendancy, working class backgrounds and having failed '11 plus' exams. I acknowledge that there are many other factors playing a role in her trajectory, such as personality and other influences and events in her life which are not so present in her narrative, but also play a part in her subjectivity constructions. Here I am showing just an aspect of her life trajectory as a woman and feminist based on her narrative of subjectivity

construction, this however is not claiming to cover or understand her whole life.

What I have argued is that feminist subjectivities are constructed and situated biographically and historically in a multiplicity of ways, that there is no one path in becoming a feminist, despite some commonalities they shared. They share these experiences of 'sensing wrong' as girls which indicates a protofeminist stance that later on allowed the rise of a feminist consciousness when connected with other experiences. Furthermore, Gabriela's narrative is similar to Bridget's in the sense that it is constructed against mainstream patriarchal culture and can be thought of as a counter narrative to patriarchal practices and discourses in postwar and neoliberal times. In addition, the ways she positioned herself in the narrative despite having some elements of 'modernity tales' (Plummer 1995) does not portray her as a heroine that surpasses all difficulties and renders her free of structural constraints. She does not follow a masculine hero prototype of narrative. On the contrary, she is very aware of the structural constraints in her life and the 'luck' she had, living in times and spaces where she used the opportunities available. Now I proceed with the narrative of Virginia, who has a different starting point in time, born in the neoliberal era and from a middle class background.

Virginia's narrative in the telling, subjectivity construction in neoliberal times.

Virginia's narrative brings to the fore a completely different starting point for the construction of her feminist subjectivity in comparison with Bridget and Gabriela. She was part of the neoliberal generation of teachers in this research. Virginia was 31 years old when I first interviewed her in 2015. She had been teaching for seven years full time in state schools in London. She has difficulties defining herself as 'feminist' despite others addressing her views as 'feminist'. She was involved in activism through her participation in demonstrations, virtual networks and individual activism.

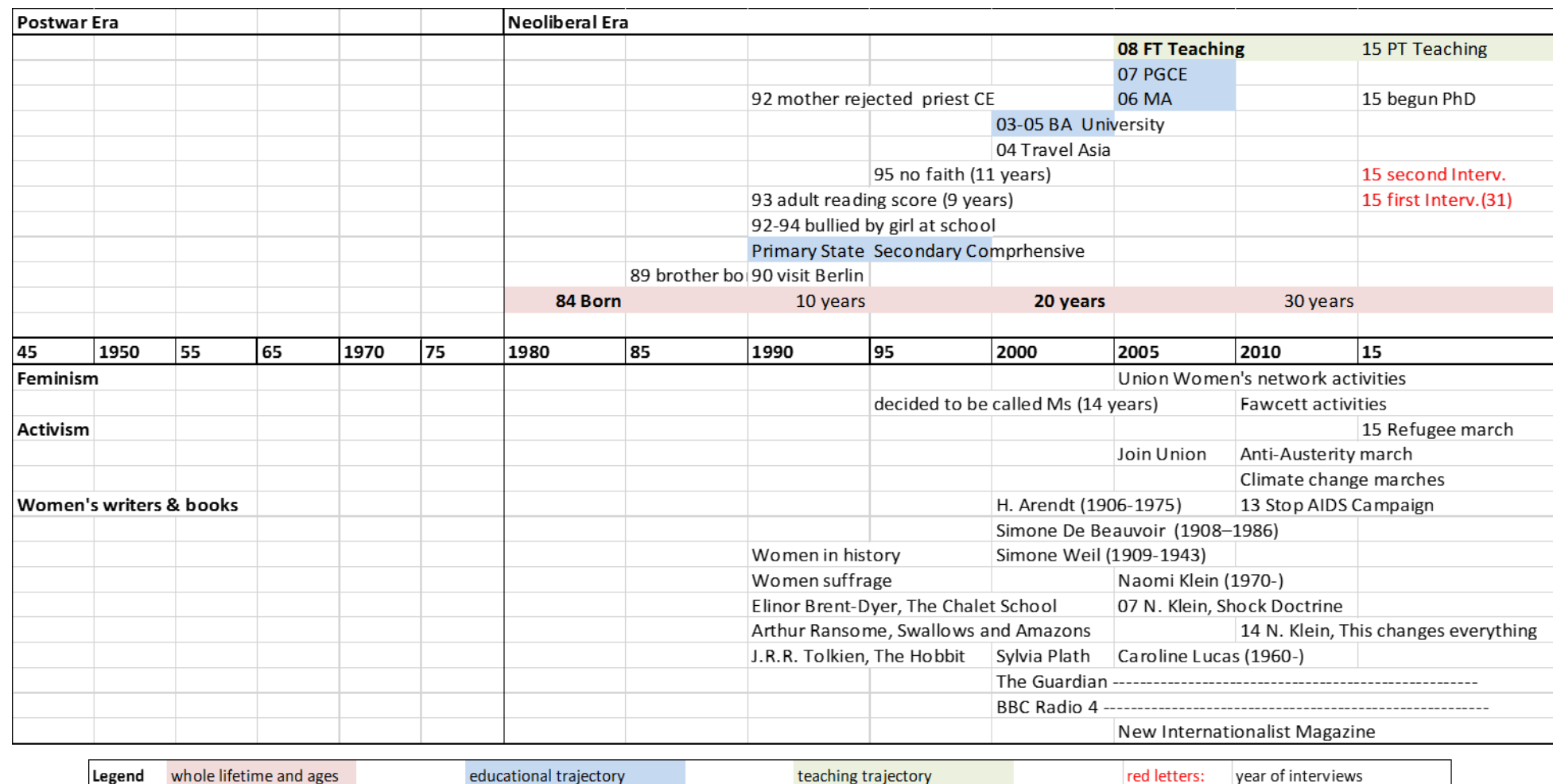
She was born in the mid-80s, schooled in the 90s, at university in 2000s and began to teach towards the end of that decade. She grew up in a different era and zeitgeist to the previous two participants, in neoliberal England. She has not lived under the heyday of the welfare state nor directly experienced the feminist movement of the 1970s. On the contrary, she grew up with 1990s and 2000s feminisms, also a time of 'postfeminist sensibilities' present in media culture and the broader culture (Gill 2007; Gill and Scharff 2011) where feminist and antifeminist discourses are entangled in very complex and contradictory ways (McRobbie 2009); as presented in chapter three. She faced a distinctive kind of patriarchal scenario, a neoliberal one, where gender discrimination is subtler, where equality laws exist, where 'the rise of inequalities and the shrinking of democratic governance' challenge feminism (Walby 2011, 11). She had been living under ongoing processes of neoliberalization concerning institutions and subjectivities (Ranson 2008; Harvey 2005). In addition, she is living in a time where experiences are commodities, and neoliberal and neoconservative discourses are in coalition (Phipps 2014) adding complexities to the scenario. Furthermore, 'individualization' and risk are considered as main features of late capitalism, late modernity of a liquid society (Bauman 2007; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001 cited in Gill and Scharff 2011, 8). It is within this social milieu that she has spent her whole life. Her times and experiences of these times are an important influence for her understanding of the world and her construction of a feminist subjectivity.

Another difference regarding Virginia's starting point for her narrative is that she was brought up in a middle class educated household where thinking

and reading were central. This environment encouraged her intellectual development. University study was something taken for granted in her case having been born into a tradition of highly educated women, which is in divergence to the stories of Gabriela and Bridget, and to most of my participants who are from working class backgrounds. In spite of the differences, Virginia shares with Gabriela and Bridget a way of telling her story, a pattern in terms of how it is constructed. Her narrative delineates a search for an alternative way of being a woman; telling of her struggles as a woman and her resistance to patriarchal practices. In that sense, Virginia's narrative could be thought of as a counter narrative to patriarchal discourses, despite being less finished and therefore more as an ongoing narrative of resistance. Moreover, regarding her sense of self and others, she mentioned on several occasions that she did not 'fit' or that she felt like an 'outsider' when referring to relations with others at institutions during her schooling and university years. My interpretation of her outsider positioning is that it expressed her rejection and resistance to neoliberal institutions and the rationality implicated; is a narrative constructed against the era in which she is living, despite in some ways still being a story in the telling. She is aware of social inequalities and discrimination against women. Feminism is part of her broader struggle for social justice. Her feminist subjectivity is built up against gendered expectations and violence in neoliberal times, against social injustice including gender inequalities.

I argue that Virginia's narrative is situated in the contradictory times of 'postfeminist sensibility' (Gill and Scharff 2011), which made feminist discourses difficult to process for a teenager or young woman. Interestingly, her experiences of feminism are related to 1950-60's feminists, that come mainly from her self-directed readings from early on and her later university studies, as developed in chapter five. In addition, her schooling years in a neoliberal educational system were difficult. She had negative experiences at school; there she realized about patriarchal gendered expectations and did not find role models or feminist influences. Nevertheless, I am not generalizing her experiences to other neoliberal generation teachers. For instance Cyndi, also in her 30s, had a different approach to feminist influences in the neoliberal era, around the 1990s and early 2000s, because of her punk family background, her participation in punk music and punk feminism.

Figure 9 Virginia's biographical timeline



Virginia grew up in the north of England, in a middle class household where both parents were professionals and with 'fairly liberal views'. Despite that, the gendered division of labour in her household was a traditional one during her childhood, her mother being the main caregiver and her father the 'provider'. This arrangement changed during her teen years when her mother went back to work becoming the main earner and her father became self employed and began to work from home. Therefore, Virginia had observed flexibility and conflicts regarding the gender division of labour at home, assuming also part of it when she was a teenager. As she said, her mother was more present in her childhood and her father in her teen years, 'for that period of time my mother was very dominant in our upbringing; she was the main caregiver and my father went out to work'. Referring to her father she added, 'He always felt very strongly that my mother had to be available for us, which at times conflicted with her going back to [work outside home]'. Despite that, she portrayed her father as not traditional in the sense that he wanted to be responsible for the caring also, 'my father always felt very strongly that he should take his part in doing that [the caring]'; and pointed to the changes when he worked from home and how that impacted on her, 'he changed a lot with that; he learned to cook [...] when I was 17,18, he and I ran the house a little bit more together, I tried to support him in doing those things[...] he and I would often have lunch together or spend a lot more time together'. Regarding the gender division of work in her home, she added that her younger brother took much less part in it unlike her younger sister. Interestingly, she had no explanation for that, similar to the experiences of Bridget or Gabriela when living discrimination as girls or teens.

In addition, Virginia's' family background contributed to her subjectivity formation with an intellectual culture of debate and reading. Her parents taught her 'to think critically' and for herself. Virginia's mother took her every week to the local library as a child, therefore from early on she developed her independent reading as she stated, 'I always read by myself', and was interested in women who stand out. Here we see how she had access to the stories of significant women through reading, a topic fully developed in chapter five. Her mother was also part of a lineage of well educated women, having an aunt, grandmother and great grandmother educated at traditional elite universities in England. Furthermore, Virginia's mother had wanted to

be a priest in the Church of England, an aspiration never fulfilled. Accordingly, her mother provided diverse images of a woman, at some point subscribing to the traditional image (being the main caregiver), and in others to a nontraditional image (wanting to be a priest).

Virginia's school years happened under a neoliberal educational system in the 1990s. This was the scenario of several biographical events related to adverse experiences during her schooling under neoliberal institutions, which impacted on her subjectivity. As she expressed, 'I didn't like school [...] I didn't like being there'. She felt different and other children also indicated that to her, 'at school I always felt a bit of an outsider'. Moreover, her middle class background, acknowledged by the children at school through her accent, which was 'seen as posh', contributed to these social distances. She was bullied by another girl at primary school when she was 9 years old. This issue lasted for 1 or 2 years, deeply affecting her to the point that she 'cried every single day about going to school' and 'had lots of times not being very happy'. Besides, another negative event pointed to the fact that her school did not encourage her advanced level of reading. On the contrary, in year three her teacher did not believe her and questioned her abilities to read independently outside the curriculum. Nevertheless, the following year she had a reading test that indicated an adult reading score when she was nine years old. Here, I see the consequences of the rigidity of the National Curriculum and the emphasis on an exam oriented system, as developed in chapter three (see also the Historical Timeline there). As she expressed, 'the teacher had not known how to deal with this because you were only allowed to read the books at the correct reading level'.

Regarding feminist influences during her schooling, Virginia did not find space to develop her interest in women's lives at school. She considered her local primary school as any other school, 'very normal'. For me, this means an institution that provided a standardized education that emphasized exam contents based on the National Curriculum; where feminism and women's issues were absent or exceptional. Likewise 'postfeminist sensibilities' were present as analysed in the context chapter three. She did not experience any feminist debates or feminist teachers in her schooling, in contrast to Bridget who lived through the 1970s feminist influences and had a feminist teacher,

as analysed earlier in this chapter. In that sense, Virginia's schooling did not feed her development of her feminist subjectivity, as she expressed,

My primary school was a very normal state primary school. It wasn't very imaginative perhaps, it wasn't like women's issues or feminism was really ever said. There was no reference to it. So I just became who I was, probably more so from home than school. The idea was simply education at school, as in educating you in traditional subjects.

Despite the absence of women's issues and 1990s feminisms in her schooling, Virginia was aware of gender differences and gender stereotypes. She remembered some events she experienced that implied a patriarchal order. Nevertheless, she did not conform to patriarchal gender expectations on girls in the 1990s –she 'did not like pink' and 'wanted equality with boys'. Her thoughts as a girl did not match the mainstream culture and gender stereotypes as for example regarding the 'Barbie' model of a woman⁷. Moreover, she had completely different ideas about what she could do as a woman, for instance up to the point that she thought she might be 'Prime Minister' as a girl, which is illustrated in the next quote. These experiences could be interpreted as protofeminism and also as initial acts of resistance to patriarchal discourses. Here are the seeds for her later elaborations of feminism and the construction of narratives of resistance against patriarchy. This following quote also illustrates how the mainstream culture was gendered in terms of tastes and toys, and how this is linked to niche markets tailored for girls and boys.

...the idea that women are set to be certain things that I didn't want to be; like, liking pink, I knew that I didn't like pink, blue was my favourite colour. Other things are, liking Barbies, I did not like Barbies, but people thought that I should like Barbies. One time, a boy told me that I should, -silly conversation- work in a Barbie factory, and this was when we were 9 [years old], in year 4, and I told him 'No', I wanted to be the Prime Minister of England!

Interestingly, Virginia's ideas as a girl were similar to an academic feminist woman born between 1935 and 1950, who expressed as a girl that 'I was

⁷ 1992's Barbie doll version is the bestselling one ever, signal of its prevalence in the 1990s mainstream culture. <http://www.barbiemedia.com/about-barbie/fast-facts.html>.

already a protofeminist at primary school' (David 2014, 105). I use this expression to encapsulate those early emotions that my participants felt from early on in unarticulated ways. Virginia reinforced this feeling of discomfort or 'outsider' in secondary school by her disconnection with the general culture at that time and the 'things going on'. She did not share with her peers the popular culture present at those times. I link this popular culture with the presence of a 'postfeminist sensibility' (Gill 2007) in the neoliberal era, exemplified in her reference to teen magazines, teen romance fiction and TV programmes, which Virginia did not like as expressed in the above quote. The prevalence of a postfeminist sensibility where feminist and antifeminist ideas are entangled (McRobbie 2004) provides contradictory messages regarding feminists and feminism. For instance, the Barbie doll that Virginia disliked as a girl provided an example of this postfeminist sensibility. The doll incorporated feminist ideas such as the promotion of versions of the doll in professions that are male dominated,⁸ but at the same time includes antifeminist ideas when prescribing a specific way of being woman, young, slim, generally white and blonde; as part of dominant discourses to 'conform to ever narrower judgements of female attractiveness' (Gill 2007, 149). What we have seen in Virginia's narrative and the following quote shows that she does not share the popular culture, tastes and views of her peers, showing a distance between her interest and those of other children, especially the girls at her school,

I felt that I was somehow a bit different and they also sometimes point that out, the other children, even in primary and secondary school. I didn't often feel very close to people at school, I often felt like I was quite separate. [...] I didn't find that I was very interested or didn't really know how to get to know people more or get into big friendship groups. [...] So, about being independent, perhaps I was always a bit independent, therefore being part of big groups of friends didn't suit me. I wasn't very comfortable because my thoughts and my personality didn't seem to fit in with the things going on. I wasn't interested in magazines; I thought they were awful. I wasn't interested in some of their teen romance fiction or programmes on TV, so I didn't really have any cultural popular knowledge to share with anyone; and we didn't really watch any TV at my house.

⁸ <http://www.barbiemedia.com/about-barbie/fast-facts.html>

In this quote, when Virginia is talking about not being 'comfortable' in this teen culture, and that she addresses as being 'different' (outsider), I see a gendered dimension operating at the same time with class issues, as in the case of her well educated middle class background. Other girls are the point of comparison; with those girls she does not share any interest as part of popular culture, a seemingly postfeminist one. Her feelings, still not completely articulated, can be interpreted as part of this 'sensing wrongs' (Ahmed 2017) or 'unpleasant feeling of conflict, marginality, alienation and tension' (Middleton 1993, 94) that I have conceptualized as part of protofeminism. These feelings, in addition to her dislike of Barbies and ideas about being the prime minister, showed a different way in which she was becoming a girl and constructing a (protofeminist) subjectivity. Furthermore, her family provided a different cultural background that reinforced her feeling as a stranger to the mainstream popular culture of the 1990s. Moreover, her self directed readings on women's history, women who 'asserted themselves' and 'women's characters' contributed to this feeling, as is addressed in chapter five. These events are also an expression of her resistance to patriarchal discourses and neoliberal constructions of femininities. It reflects her early positioning as a different girl, a form of protofeminism, which is signalled with the fact that she decided to be called 'Ms' when she was 14. It also shows she was beginning to articulate oppositional worldviews (hooks 2000).

Later on as a young woman, Virginia went to university, following the path of the lineage of well educated women in her family. This experience contrasted with Bridget and Gabriela. For Virginia, a university career was expected; was taken for granted also in accordance with her middle class background. Before university she 'had a gap year' to travel. When she entered university she pursued independently her intellectual aspirations about women writers and thinkers. Through her reading in French she encountered Simone de Beauvoir, which was her way into an articulated positioning as a feminist, despite the fact that she felt uncomfortable with the label. Again at university she felt like an outsider and did not feel part of the group of classmates. She was a bit older than them and 'they did a lot of messing around, university student stuff, and I wasn't interested'. She expressed, 'again I felt quite detached from people' in the sense that her way of thinking was different and

her stance as a woman also was different. She began deepening and elaborating her thoughts on feminism through her reading, and realized the distance between 'me and the others'. She did not understand why people were not as passionate as her about their studies or lectures. For instance, when they read Beauvoir's book 'Les Belles Images' (1966) her classmates on her French course had a completely different approach to reading it as they did not engage with the issues in the same way, 'my class didn't like studying it at all [...] and a female student commented "Oh, that's not a very nice book"' when for Virginia 'it seemed to be the most important book at that time!'; and she continued, 'actually that comment on society made by Simone de Beauvoir was really, really important, so I realised that I shouldn't be studying French, I should be studying Philosophy or Theology' and consequently changed course to be able to 'discuss in an analytical and philosophical way' and which allowed her to be 'much more engaged'. She was impacted by that book because of the way Beauvoir 'reflected' her way of thinking, how women should be, reflecting on the 'images' imposed on women as she explains, 'It's all about the fact that we create for ourselves these lives that are actually meaningless. At the end she [the book's protagonist] sees no point, she's the perfect wife, she has two children, and she lives the perfect life'.

Virginia elaborates those issues and thinking about 'images imposed on women' in current times, making connections between past and present. She is also reflecting that these pressures on women are not only external, that now they come from within, 'they put it on themselves', which is one of the crucial aspect identified as part of postfeminist sensibilities, the internal self surveillance and discipline (Gill 2007, 155). In her case, perhaps because of her critical thinking and feminist readings, she is more aware of the oppression, despite the fact that she did not use this word. I consider that oppression is the concept that addressed her feelings when she talked of being 'sick' or 'nauseous' when confronted with these images about women in mass media as illustrated in the following quote,

I suppose with women there is a very obvious version of putting on the 'image', so wearing the clothes, putting the makeup on, is like dressing yourself for the performance; and the magazines and the other things that literally sometimes make me sick when I see them

in the supermarket, makes me feel nauseous, are the sort of performance you need to perform. You need to be the same as everyone else. I think women are very vulnerable to that requirement and they put it on themselves as well. I don't think it's just men saying 'you need to wear makeup' or 'you need to be who society requires'.

In connection with neoliberal times and postfeminist sensibilities, it seems much more difficult for her to find women's experiences that contribute to build her feminist subjectivity in the general culture of the 1990s and 2000 onward. It seems that this postfeminist sensibility, that permeates contemporary culture, makes it difficult and confusing to navigate the times for women like Virginia. Moreover, as she did not really find in her surroundings feminist women or expressions of feminist movements, it was complex for her to build a feminist subjectivity. Therefore, she found it difficult to articulate her experiences and those of other contemporary women's experiences, such as those of her peers. In addition, Virginia had no influential teacher or lecturer in her school or university years who was feminist, and her female friends did not really share her feminist interests. She did, however, find an inspirational lecturer in her Master Degree and identified some public women who were not necessarily feminist but that inspired her way of being a woman in current society, such as a Green Party MP and the journalist Naomi Klein. Feminist narratives and women's stories seemed less available in the mainstream culture of everyday life; and the ones available provided contradictory versions of feminisms with antifeminism; and finally the ones that were circulated did not make sense to her particular experiences. It is not a surprise that she searched in books for what she did not find in her relationships, by this I mean women 'who asserted themselves', as addressed in chapter five.

In summary, the narrative of Virginia had a different starting point in comparison to Bridget and Gabriela (the others presented in this chapter), in both the sense of her middle class, educated upbringing and growing up under neoliberal times. Her intellectual profile and class background also made her different from other participants in the neoliberal generation. She did not live her early years and formative experiences under the influences of a strong and widespread feminist movement; neither did she particularly

find feminist women's stories in the public sphere. She had faced patriarchal practices and discourses from early on in her schooling and did not receive the influences of the feminism movement in the 1990s and 2000s when she was growing up. Therefore, she searched for that influence in books where she found stories to make sense of herself. Her feminism comes mainly from her readings of women philosophers that will be analysed in the next chapter as meaningful women that impacted on her subjectivity. However, she shared with Bridget and Gabriela those constitutive features of what I have labelled a 'protofeminist subjectivity; that is to say early sensations of 'something wrong' and the gut feelings of disliking the prescribed ways of being a woman and the experiences of being confronted with patriarchal cultures. Moreover, Virginia's way of constructing her narrative against patriarchal discourse and the struggle against it, is a narrative of resistance, a counter narrative in the making.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken a thematic narrative approach in analysing three respondents' narratives in depth, covering the period from the postwar to the neoliberal era, emphasising different decades in each one. In discussing Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia's narratives, I highlighted how 'events in time' have influenced their construction of feminist subjectivities which emerged early in their lives as what can be called protofeminist. In particular, these events are related to the zeitgeists of the postwar and the neoliberal eras focusing on lived experiences of feminisms and patriarchy. In that way, this chapter has analysed the connection between personal biographies and historical times that contributed to the formation of their feminist subjectivities.

I have argued that a feminist subjectivity is constructed in a relational way to events illustrated through the three narratives. However, these processes of subjectivity construction occur in a plurality of ways. By this I mean Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia experienced feminism and patriarchy diversely and at different times -biographical and historical. Firstly, regarding the ways in which the diverse expressions of feminisms have influenced their

subjectivities, the three narratives showed different pathways. These women experienced feminisms at different moments in their life course, in different historical moments and through diverse events, contributing to the formation of their feminist subjectivities in a multiplicity of ways. Bridget, from the postwar generation had been influenced by events related to 1970s through expressions of feminisms in her school years as a teenager and later on as a young teacher campaigning for equality in promotions for female teacher. Gabriela (postwar generation) experienced the influences of the feminist movement as an adult woman in the 1980s, when she became engaged in the antipornography campaigns and through the academic feminism she encountered as a mature student. Virginia, a teacher from the neoliberal generation, lived under the cultural climate of postfeminist sensibilities, which informed her subjectivity.

Secondly, regarding events related to patriarchy, I illustrated the variety of forms in which patriarchal practices were lived at different points in their lives and how have they impacted in my participants' subjectivities. These events related to the experiences of gender discrimination, gender based violence and patriarchal gendered expectations, which also occurred in a diversity of ways in each era. Bridget faced patriarchal gendered expectations, discrimination and violence outside the home when she was a teenager and later on as a young teacher. In contrast, Gabriela confronted a patriarchal father from early on in her life, and had to face discriminatory institutional practices when as a married woman. Virginia, part of the neoliberal generation, had experienced patriarchal gendered expectations mainly outside her home from very early on, and became aware of discrimination as a young woman. Consequently, the chapter has illustrated differences between women from both the same and different generations. Each narrative has been influenced in different ways by postwar and neoliberal eras, as well as by diverse expressions of feminisms and patriarchy.

In relation to the kind of narratives these feminist teachers told, there are nevertheless, similarities. Despite the three women having diverse experiences of patriarchy, which impacted on their subjectivity constructions, all of them fabricated narratives against patriarchal discourses. They began from an early age to delineate a sense of self that is built against patriarchal

discourses. That is to say, resisting mainstream perceptions about women and gender norms, resulting in the accumulation of resources to feed their feminist subjectivities. They had as girls and teenagers those unarticulated gut feelings, impressions of injustice, incomprehension, discomfort, rage, aversion and 'gut level awareness' (Jaggar 1996 cited by Ahmed 2017). Therefore, I argued that they began from early on to build up protofeminist subjectivities, which were constructed against the mainstream ideas and practices. In their narratives, these oppositional worldviews (Hercus 2005; hooks 2000) were present and in the making from early on. In addition, their experiences as girls and teenagers growing into adults involved several examples of practices of micro resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999).

Furthermore, these narratives were elaborated as counter narratives to patriarchal discourses, especially the ones of Bridget and Gabriela. Virginia's narrative, despite constructed against mainstream patriarchal practices and discourses seemed less finished, an issue that can be related to her age (in her 30s), in comparison to Bridget and Gabriela (in their 60s), who are at a time in their 'life courses' implying a long accumulation of experiences. Likewise, the narratives of Bridget, Gabriela, although less so in the case of Virginia, can be thought of as 'modernist tales' in the sense of having significant elements of 'suffering, surviving and surpassing' (Plummer 1995). Especially in those narratives of Bridget and Gabriela, we see this transformation in terms of becoming the women they are and constructing a feminist subjectivity. In both narratives, there are transformations in terms of the participant's position and class mobility. Virginia's narrative seems less finished as she is still working on ways of making sense of her experiences as a young woman. Finally, their narratives are told in a way that does not follow a heroic pattern of traditional masculine narratives. They are aware of their possibilities of action and resistance but under restricted scenarios. They are protagonists of their stories but aware of their times and restrictions as socially situated individuals. In that sense, I argue that they are neither heroic nor victims narratives. They are everyday life narratives and perhaps in that sense can be consider as containing elements of the 'late modernist' stories (Plummer 1995).

Having examined how subjectivities are constructed in relation to events in time, I now proceed to work on how the subjectivities are constructed in relation to encounters with significant women whom they meet personally or through their reading. This is the topic of the next chapter, the influences of these significant women in my participants' lives and their contribution of alternative narratives to feed my participants' feminist subjectivities.

Chapter 5 Subjectivities, significant women and imagined sisterhood

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analysed three narratives illustrating how specific life events contribute to the construction of feminist subjectivities, making reference especially to the impact of patriarchy and feminism through postwar and neoliberal eras. In this chapter, I continue developing the idea that subjectivity is constructed in a relational way, but with another focus. Now, I explore the connection between the construction of feminist subjectivities and encounters with 'significant others', specifically significant women' who challenged patriarchy. I follow Plummer's (1995, 2001) use of 'significant others' to refers to 'the important people in your life who play a part in shaping the stories of that life' (2001, 44), which draws from George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism (1995, 190). My respondents' encounters with these significant women were especially important in their formative years but also later on as adults. These encounters are experienced in two different ways, a) as interpersonal relationships and b) as imagined sisterhood. By 'imagined sisterhood' I refer to participants' encounters with women thinkers and writers through reading, through history and through study with whom they constructed an imagined relationship.

My main argument in this chapter is that the feminist subjectivities of these teachers are constructed through narratives in relation to significant women who provided stories of women's struggles for emancipation. This is based on the idea that stories contribute to identity formation and that stories are based on other stories, as Lawler states: 'various forms of narrative become resources on which we can draw in constituting our own narrative identity' (2008, 20-21). Accordingly, I also follow Plummer's analysis in the sense that

'the tales that significant others give' are 'amongst the most fundamental shapers of a life story' (1995, 39); and that 'we consume stories in order to produce our own' (Plummer 1995, 43). Moreover, these significant women gave them a sense of belonging to a 'collectivity', real or imagined, of likeminded women. I took the word 'collectivity' from Ahmed (2017) who talks about a 'feminist collectivity', 'knowing full well that this we is not a foundation but what we are working toward' and assuming the 'histories of the difficulty of that we' (2017, 2). I link this idea with hook's (2000) notion of sisterhood in the feminist movement as based on the acknowledgement of differences, hostility and conflict between women. This feminist collectivity does not presume homogeneity. What I want to stress with the idea of belonging to a feminist collectivity, real or imagined, is the possibility to connect with others whose experiences, strategies, resources make sense to the experiences of my participants and contributed to their becoming; to their construction of feminist subjectivities. This feminist collectivity is relevant also as 'stories and narratives depend upon communities that will create and hear those stories', and they operate as 'social worlds, interpretive communities, communities of memory' with a core political dimension (Plummer 1995, 145). In this regard, the narratives of my participants are constructed in relation to this community of likeminded women. Similarly, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty expressed in an interview about becoming a feminist activist, 'we are forged in communities' (Dauphinee 2016, 89) from which people learn how to make sense of their experiences and how to resist. In addition, the significant women that populated the life of my participants contributed with feminist knowledge and frameworks or feminist frames (Hercus 2005; Middleton 1993) that helped them to make sense of their lives in a patriarchal society.

In this chapter, the decision to focus on the influence of significant women is based on the key role they played in the formation of feminist subjectivities. One of the difficulties my participants faced in becoming feminists, especially as girls and young women, was the impossibility of understanding why and how other women accepted gender discrimination. Therefore, encountering significant women that confronted patriarchy is crucial to build up a feminist subjectivity. This does not mean that there are no significant men, as I do mention a few here, but they were less common and less central in terms of

their contribution to the construction of my respondents' feminist subjectivities.

This chapter is based on thematic analysis of five core narratives, with the other 10 cases as background information. The chapter is structured in two sections. In the first part I analyse the encounters with significant women they met through interpersonal relationships especially in their early formative years but also as young adults. Generally, these encounters were with significant women who were feminist or independent such as mothers and peers who were influential in the formation of the participants' feminist subjectivities. The second section of the chapter examines the encounters with significant women through reading, in what I conceptualize as an imagined sisterhood. It refers to reading of books written by women or about women in both the past and present who followed alternative paths and confronted patriarchy.

Figure 10 Core narratives used in chapter five

Pseudonym	Age	Class background	Ethnicity	Teaching 1st/ 2nd profession	Years teaching	Working scheme	Place last school	Last School Type	Last Position	Union Roles (past/ present)	Date Interview
Andrea	47	Working class	White British	2nd	20	FT	London	Secondary	Teacher/ Head of Depart.	Member Representative Advisor	2013/15
Esperanza	58	Working class	White British	1st	30	FT	North England	Secondary Severe Emotional Behavioural Difficulties	Supply Teacher	Member Representative Advisor	2014/15
Gabriela	65	Working class	White British (mix)	2nd	15	Retired from PT	South England	Secondary	Teacher	Member	2013/15
Virginia	31	Middle class	White British	1st	8	PT (before FT)	London	Secondary Further Education College	Teacher, Head of Depart.	Member	2015/16

Legend:	Postwar generation
	Neoliberal generation

Encounters with significant women through interpersonal relationships

In this section I focus on the narratives of Andrea and Esperanza, through which I illustrate the interpersonal relationships with significant women who contributed to their feminist subjectivities. I analyse each story and present a biographical timeline to give an overview of their lives. There are similarities between both cases albeit with some nuance. They are both postwar generation teachers working full time; Andrea in her late 40s and Esperanza in her late 50s. Andrea had a feminist mother and Esperanza had a non traditional mother.

I selected Andrea and Esperanza because their interpersonal relationships with significant women differ from those of the other narratives. That is to say they had the presence of feminist or alternative women inside and outside their families of origin from early on. Additionally, they continued to have several encounters with significant women in groups and women only spaces beyond their home and childhood. In this regard, they contrast with the narratives of Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia (chapter four) who despite having some strong or independent women around, did not have a feminist mother or friends or immediate groups to share their experiences with when growing up.

Andrea's narrative, a feminist mother and other encounters with significant women from early on

Andrea was a postwar generation teacher born in 1966 from a working class background as she described herself (which is the concept of class I am using, see introduction of the thesis). When interviewed in 2014 she was in her late 40s, working as a fulltime teacher and engaged actively in different kinds of activism inside and outside the teachers' union. She had been teaching for around 20 years in London. She identified herself as feminist from her teen years onward and this was reflected in her engagement in women issues and gender equality struggles throughout her life. Andrea's feminist politics are interconnected with equality issues, which are central in

her worldview, her teaching and her activism (see Figure 11 Andrea's biographical timeline).

What is salient in Andrea's narrative is that her life was populated, from early on, by several significant interpersonal relationships with women that provided first hand experiences about what feminism and an everyday feminist can be. I argue that from those close and vivid experiences, she can draw on women's stories, feminist knowledge and a sense of belonging to a collectivity of feminist and non traditional women. With those women she shared experiences, knowledge, ideas, values and goals; starting with her feminist mother, her older sister, women around her, peers, teachers when young, and groups of women later on. In her case, her progressive father also had an important influence. Each of these interpersonal relationships contributed through a variety of resources towards building up her feminist subjectivity through her early formative years and young adulthood. These meaningful relationships with women allowed her to explore how to be a woman, to develop freely, to share experiences and to learn how to challenge patriarchy. Moreover, those relationships gave her confidence and legitimacy. In addition, these encounters with other women were not only one to one, but also collective, including in women only spaces, which provided a safe environment to both explore and be supported. In that sense, Andrea had a positive starting point. Andrea's narrative also illustrates how the influences of 'events in time', as explored in chapter four, are interwoven together with the influences of 'significant women' in her subjectivity construction (the focus of this chapter). She grew up under the influences of 1970s feminism sketched in chapter three, and as she stated, 'feminism was in the atmosphere when I was growing up in the 1960s/70s'. This idea implies that feminism was something accessible and available for anyone.

Figure 11 Andrea's Biographical Timeline

Postwar Era					Neoliberal Era							
												15 2nd Int.
												14 1st Interview (48)
Teaching							93 Teach (27 years)					Educational Special Project
							92 PGCE					
						85 University	90 working					
						6 Form College						
						Sec. Comprehensive						
59 sister born						Primary School					03 daughter born	
		66 Born		10 years		20 years		30 years		40 years		50 years
55	1960	65	1970	75	1980	85	1990	95	2000	2005	2010	15
Feminism						Drama Women's Group	Group Female Teachers			Union Women's network		
						Anti-Page 3 campaign						
						Critical Magazine college						
Activism			Collecting signatures				93 Join Union			Several union leadership roles (local and national)		
				Engage in Green Politics				School union representative			Educational rights children (U)	
				Campaigning							Against Academies (as parent)	
				Green Peace								
						Andrea Dworkin						
Women's writers & books			Spare Rib		Kate Chopin	Dale Spender						
					Maya Angelou	Mary Daly						
					Tony Morrison	Women's Press						

Legend	whole lifetime and ages	educational trajectory	teaching trajectory	red letters: year of interviews
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One significant woman for Andrea is her mother, who contributed to her feminist subjectivity from early on. In other research, mothers of feminist academics from different class backgrounds have been found to be 'key influences either negatively or positively' (David 2014) in becoming feminist, in the sense that the women interviewed rejected or embraced their mother's examples. For Andrea, her mother was definitely a positive and crucial influence and can be defined as 'feminist' according to my definition of feminisms. Andrea's mother was from a working class background but was the 'first in the family' to go to the university (David 2014), according to Andrea. Andrea's mother was a single parent at the end of the 1950s and later meet Andrea's father. Andrea's mother was also the higher earner in her household. These features made Andrea's mother a non typical working class woman. I argue that Andrea's mother provided a firsthand story of women's struggles and a practical feminist framework that contributed to building a feminist subjectivity. Andrea's development as a girl and woman was strongly affected by her mother's views and experiences which is illustrated in Andrea's own words as follows,

As a young woman, she found herself with a child and no father, very much isolated from her family and so on. I think her particular experiences of being a single parent quite a long time ago, made her very sure about the needs for women's rights. For example, when she had the baby there were no maternity rights, there was no sick leave for women, none of the things that we take for granted now that women had fought for. She came from a period when women didn't have these things and fought for them, so when I was born, these were quite newly won rights. [...] we should always vote because that vote had been fought for, that was her own personal experiences. So, she had very strong political opinions about on what women should put up with or shouldn't put up with.

What I highlight from this quote is the practical feminist understanding her mother brought into Andrea's life; sharing the difficulties she confronted as a single mother in a patriarchal society and the certainty that women's struggles are crucial in order to enhance women's rights. In contrast to feminist educators (Middleton 1993), Andrea begun to build up a feminist framework not based on academic knowledge, but on her interpersonal relationships. Her feminist mother, as a 'significant other', provided practical feminist knowledge based on everyday life experiences and an example of

what a feminist woman could be. This is distinctive in Andrea's own construction of a feminist subjectivity, as she had a significant woman proximate from early on with a clear positioning regarding feminist politics.

Other participants had mothers who were 'independent' (Virginia) or 'strong' (Bridget) or 'non traditional' (Esperanza) who had positive influences in their subjectivity development. However, these women did not offer such a clear feminist stance which made a difference in terms of the path they followed in becoming feminist. Bridget, for instance, talked about her 'lack of confidence' in her early years, in contrast with Andrea who felt assertive as a teen.

Furthermore, Andrea's upbringing by a feminist mother and a non patriarchal father was clearly central to her sense of self. Andrea expressed how she was 'brought up as a feminist' explaining that her upbringing was free of gender stereotypes and she was encouraged to fully develop as a person, 'I was encouraged to be an individual first and not a girl first', and she was stimulated 'to speak out and have a voice'. Andrea grew up in a non traditional home in terms of gender division of labor. Her parents did not match the 'male breadwinner family model' (Lewis 1992). As Andrea expressed, 'my mother was the main breadwinner and my father did a lot of the childcare'; in that sense 'it wasn't a traditionally gendered household' and she had 'two role models that bucked the trend, not fitting the stereotypes'. She added also that her father 'comes from quite a traditional background which he kind of rejected – as part of that whole 60s/70s thing- of people finding new roles, new ways of doing things, that I think appealed to him'. These interpersonal relationships were fundamental in contributing to Andrea's sense of self, as a person with rights, with self worth and one to be respected by others irrespective of her gender. Andrea's non patriarchal working class family contrasted with almost all the other participants who were raised in a patriarchal household, with more or less authoritarian fathers, as in the case of Gabriela and Juana for instance.

Furthermore, Andrea had an elder sister to look up to, who was another significant woman who influenced Andrea's initial engagement with activism, 'My sister was very involved with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and she was seven years older than me, so I think I just followed her lead a bit. So,

my first stuff was green politics and then I moved into feminism'. Similarly to Andrea, Bridget also had an older sister that was influential in contributing to her development. Andrea's experiences of a feminist mother is unique amongst my participants, and had significant influence for her feminist becoming. Bridget, Rosemund, Esperanza, and Virginia also had mothers that contributed with their experiences as 'strong' or independent figures. By stressing Andrea's feminist mother as a significant woman I do not imply that mothers are the only determinant factor in the construction of feminist subjectivities. As Lawler analysed, there are a 'multiplicity of ways in which gender is produced in the subject' and subjectivities do not 'begin and end in the mother child dyad' (Lawler 2000, 91). On the contrary, as developed in this chapter, subjectivities are constructed in relation to a diverse range of significant women, not only in direct relationships. In addition, as addressed in the other chapters, the construction of subjectivity is also affected by events in time (chapter four) and in relation to experiences of 'thinking-doing' later on in life (chapter six).

Andrea confronted patriarchal practices outside her home of origin, in a similar way to Bridget, Virginia and Esperanza. Due to her feminist upbringing, gender discrimination was a new experience to her as a girl and teenager, 'Because my parents brought me `up to be assertive and not restricted by my gender, when I came up against people in the outside world who did want to restrict me by my gender, it was like a real shock!'; and she continued later 'I often behaved or spoke in a way that got a reaction that showed me that some people thought I didn't have the right to behave in that way or say that thing'. Here I see how she already had a feminist attitude as a teenager, in contrast to other respondents that I have categorized as 'protofeminist' when girls or teenagers. In terms of her everyday life, her stance was supported by her finding of significant others with whom to do something about it. For instance, she had likeminded female peers 'who felt the same way and were prepared to do things', and therefore, she was able to exercise resistance in small acts and experiment with how to challenge patriarchal practices such as sexual harassment, when teenagers,

I had a friend, we would be quite assertive walking down the street together and if we got hassled we would not just be embarrassed and walk away, we would turn around and have an argument with

them. Which it's not exactly activism, but it's challenging behaviours and we became quite assertive in doing that. I think a lot of young men were used to being able to say what they wanted and many young women just accepting it.

These experiences enabled her to learn how to challenge gender discrimination from early on, taking into account that she was confident enough to do that with the support of her friends and non patriarchal parents as she stated, 'you just get a certain confidence about challenging people'. With her friends, Andrea had the opportunity to develop her abilities to deal with patriarchal practices and to share those experiences. In that sense Andrea had, as a teenager, the company of meaningful females who were thinking and acting like her. They shared feminist interests and a quest for being a different kind of woman, and acting accordingly. This contrasts to other respondents (Bridget, Gabriela, Virginia) who had more lonely journeys into feminism.

In addition, Andrea encountered significant others through the interpersonal relationships with other girls in a theatre group at a girls' school when she was a teenager. These relationships in women only spaces she attended for several years contributed to her feminist subjectivity in terms of explorations, company and sharing experiences. Moreover, those relationships were significant as some have continued to be maintained over time, as she told me, 'I have a very good relationship still with some of the key members of the cast of that time'. In spite of not being feminist in its purposes, the group provided a safe space for experimenting with gender roles by playing male and female characters, something Andrea said, 'was quite interesting'. She also expressed that 'there was obviously quite good camaraderie there [...] so it was quite a nice female space to be in'. Andrea also regarded these experiences as 'transformational' because they affected her sense of confidence, '*stuff I thought I couldn't*' [do] and that was 'a key moment for me [...] I felt I kind of stepped out of a sort of fear into a confidence'. These relationships inside a group gave her a positive experience of belonging to a collective of women, a sense of company and a space to share women's stories.

When Andrea was growing up, she was surrounded by adult women who identified as feminist and some female teachers who were feminist or non traditional in terms of gender identities and roles in their teaching. These significant women were important for her subjectivity because they not only provided examples of what feminism means and illustrated women's stories of struggles, but also because they legitimated Andrea's explorations and stance as a feminist teenager. As she presented in her own words,

A lot of the women I knew identified as feminists and [...] I would have heard them talk about stuff. It was the 70's, so there were copies of Spare Rib⁹ around that I would have seen, there would have been, you know, battles about reproduction, contraception and abortion and that sort of thing going on. There was the whole 'Page 3' thing going on [...]. There was just the sense that there was stuff there that women had to fight for still. But equally I had role models who were doing that, so it felt quite lively [...]; and my education, I had teachers that were deliberately... that would challenge stereotypes and so on. So, even in my lessons there would be quite modern thinking, you know, this idea that you have pictures of girls being builders, and that sort of thing, and there was this need to challenge stereotypes. That was the kind of culture I guess I was around when I was growing up.

Here the presence of significant women contributed to an environment where topics relevant for women were discussed and mainstream ideas about women were challenged. Furthermore, I argue that being surrounded by feminist women makes a difference in terms of having the confidence that other women who participated in this research lacked as children, teens or young adults (for instance Bridget in chapter four). This sense of company and belonging to community or 'feminist collectivity' (Ahmed 2017) distinguishes Andrea from the other participants. From early on she was able to feel that she shared her struggles with other feminist women. This also arguably legitimised her experiences and struggles as a woman.

⁹ Spare Rib was an active part of the emerging Women's Liberation Movement in the UK in the late 20th century. Running from 1972-93, this now iconic magazine challenged the stereotyping and exploitation of women, while supporting collective, realistic solutions to the hurdles women faced. <https://www.bl.uk/spare-rib>

This contrasts with other participants' stories as in the cases of Gabriela and Virginia for whom their feminist becoming was less of an accompanied journey in terms of relationships with significant women.

The relevance of Andrea's narrative was that she continued taking part in groups of likeminded females as an adult woman. When she began teaching in the early 1990s, she organized with other women a group of female teachers in a male dominated school. There she found again company and support. Moreover, they built strength together –'some kind of power'- in Andrea's words, to promote and defend women's rights in the arena of her profession. She had taken stock of her former experiences and built on that. She brought women's struggles for rights into her workplace in order to confront patriarchal practices in this professional setting. This shows how her feminist subjectivity continues to feed from significant women, progressive and feminist, and from the female collective spaces throughout her life.

The first school I taught in, [...] there were seventy members of staff, twelve of them were women, so that's very much a minority. We set up a women's group in that school to give us some kind of power. And that was... the senior management team didn't like that at all – they called us 'stropky women'. You know, just being difficult for no reason. But it was like a lifeline and there was a lot of... [...] actually, there was a real need. We had some serious incidences of sexual harassment from some of the students, a lot of sexist language from some of the male teachers and that sort of thing.

In summary, Andrea (as presented above) was surrounded by progressive and feminist women who contributed with their worldviews and values to her feminist subjectivity construction from early on. She referred to her own approach to feminism as 'quite lively', influenced by interpersonal relationships to women who were enacting an everyday feminism. She found women at different stages in her life, when growing up, then as a teenager and later as a young adult. She had a feminist mother, a progressive father, then female friends and peers to explore different ways of being a woman. In addition, other adults outside her home also legitimated and supported her, as presented in her story; such as the teachers in her school years. She had company and support of significant women all the way through her early and later formative years, which contributed to building a feminist subjectivity from her teens onward. These significant women fed her sense of self as

feminist, contributed to enhancing her confidence and legitimated her enactment of feminism. Their stories and experiences contributed to develop her feminist stance through providing and sharing experiences and explorations. In that sense, she was part of a collectivity of feminist/alternative women who showed her different ways of being a woman and being in the world. She found her way into feminism accompanied by these significant women from early on in her life in both one to one relationships and as part of groups.

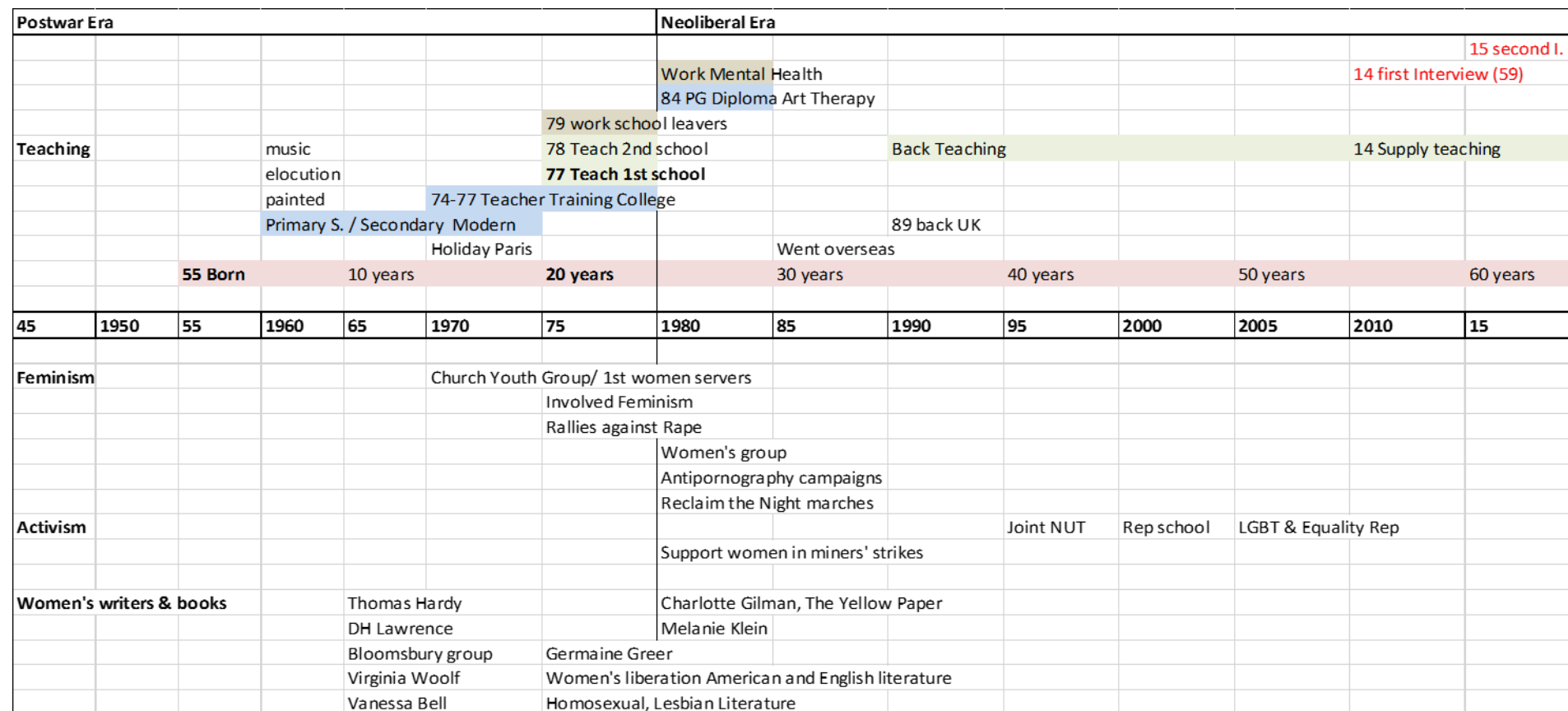
Andrea's narrative illustrated a less common path than other participants, in terms of the influences of significant women on her subjectivity construction through interpersonal and long term continuing relationships. She had a positive starting point because of the presence of her feminist mother, the only one with this experience among my respondents. Despite these differences from other participants, the way Andrea constructed her feminist subjectivity is similar to Esperanza, the narrative that is developed in the following section. They shared the positive influences of their mothers, during their early years. They encountered significant women in collective spaces and women only spaces who supported their development and shared their journeys from early on. In the following section I present the story of Esperanza and her relationships with significant women who contributed to the construction of her subjectivity.

Esperanza's narrative, encounter with significant women

Esperanza was a postwar generation teacher born in 1955 in the south of England, who self identified as coming 'from a very working class background' (See Figure 12 Esperanza's biographical timeline). Her early years in primary school she describes positively, but later on at different schools she was bullied and felt like an 'outsider'. Her mother encouraged her to study, so she went on to take O level and 'A' levels, followed by attending a Teacher Training College at the end of the 1970s. Since then she has worked as a special needs teacher for over thirty years. She came to teaching through a nonlinear trajectory, having pursued another profession prior to the classroom. Interestingly, she did not identify as 'feminist' because she does not like labels; despite this I define her as feminist due to her engagement with women's rights and gender equality issues throughout her life and activism. She grew up under the influence of the feminist movement of the late 1970s and was part of the women's movement in the 1980s. She is the only lesbian among my participants. When interviewed in 2014 she was in her late 50s doing supply teaching and engaged in several activist roles in her union, including LGBT issues.

The narrative of Esperanza illustrates how significant women from early childhood through late formative years contributed to her subjectivity construction, in a similar way to Andrea. What is distinctive in her case is her engagement as a young adult in a feminist group not linked to the exercise of a profession. This contrasts with the experiences of Andrea and Bridget, who as adults were part of feminist groups as teachers, in the professional arena. Nevertheless, Esperanza shared with Andrea and Bridget the experience of significant women not only by individual relationships, but also being part of groups, in a collectivity of women. This shows a specific way of engaging with others and society; it is another way of building a feminist stance. In opposition, Gabriela and Virginia, did not have the experience of participating as permanent members of any feminist or women's group.

Figure 12 Esperanza's biographical timeline



Legend whole lifetime and ages educational trajectory other work trajectory teaching trajectory red letters: year of interviews

In Esperanza's narrative her mother is a significant woman who contributed to the formation of her feminist subjectivity from early on. Her mother was not a feminist in the sense that she has no special interest in women's issues and gender equality, but she provided a woman's story of gender discrimination that made Esperanza aware of patriarchal practices. Her mother's story set a background for Esperanza to begin to understand women's issues as a girl and teenager. Despite that, her family of origin was traditional in terms of the gender division of labour in the household, her mother being the main carer and in charge of the housework and her father the provider. Nevertheless, her father was a non patriarchal figure as she added, 'my dad was very quiet'. Both parents were positive figures in her upbringing, as she said, 'They encouraged me to be and do whatever came, whatever I wanted to do, really'. Reflecting back, Esperanza described her mother as a non traditional working class woman in the sense of having other aspirations and interests, as follows,

My mother was a bit of a woman on her own, she was a bit of an iconoclast really in terms of breaking the mould [...] because she had this passion for music. She was quite fiery and quite embittered because of the lack of intellectual fulfilment really. So, I think in some ways she wasn't like a traditional mother, she was a bit different.

The way Esperanza described her mother also allows me to think that she provided an example of alternative ways of being a woman. Her mother had experienced patriarchy in her home of origin where her aspirations were shut down and carried feelings of nonfulfillment through her life. Because of that, her mother's story not only contributed to the formation of Esperanza's feminist subjectivity regarding women's discrimination, but also acknowledging the consequences of it in the life of her mother. Esperanza became aware of the difficulties women faced initially through her mother's story.

My mother had always wanted to teach, but coming from a very working class family, although she was at grammar school and wanted to teach French and Music, her father took her out of school before she could complete her qualifications and she was thwarted in that way. I think she carried that for the whole of her life. I think in some way I kind of absorbed some of her desire to teach and she

said to me, you can pass on your interest in art to others and it will always stand you in good stead. Again, coming from a working class family, even then, you know it was quite a good thing to go into that profession, I guess.

My maternal grandparents were almost sort of late Victorian in their attitude, they were quite strict, even with me as a child, and certainly imposed sexism upon my mother who was very different. [...] My grandfather [...] insisted that whatever family money there was should go to her brother because he was male. That set up a very unfortunate, a very frustrating and embittering experience for my Mum and she was whipped out of school, and she was at Grammar School doing very well.

Esperanza has not only accessed her mother's story but also she benefited from her encouragement and continuous support. She highlighted how central her mother was in her development in terms of bringing in different values 'like singing, reading, literature, theatre, particularly classical music'. Her mother cultivated that and pushed Esperanza forward in those issues, encouraging those tastes during her childhood and teen years as she expressed, 'I grew up very much within that environment from an early age where people would come round and sing, we always had a piano in the house. So, I guess in some ways it's very formative and it's certainly formed my love of music'. She also had for instance elocution lessons and poetry reading 'whilst Mum could afford to send me there'. That distanced Esperanza from her working class origins and from her peers as a teenager, 'I kind of absorbed from her a way of achieving really moving out of a working class and into a middle class and a security if you like, a financial security'. In that sense Esperanza can be considered also a 'class shifter' (Hey 2006) similar to Bridget and Gabriela.

As a child, Esperanza loved school but when growing up things changed, she began to be bullied in the school. There were no significant others in this social space. She was becoming different because of her arts interest encouraged by her mother, as she said, 'I liked classical music'; and also in her way of dressing, as she conveyed, 'I would always been a little bit of what you call a Tomboy'. She was also a prolific reader from childhood and continued that. She had no friends at school and did not like it. At secondary school, she has no space to put forward her intellectual interest, particularly

in English and Literature, where she wanted more from the teachers, as she put it, 'I wanted bigger discussions'. Here we find a similarity with Virginia, who also was bullied at school because of being different and school did not feed her intellectual interest. Both of them used the word 'outsider' to describe their experiences during their schooling. In that sense, they undertake a solitary journey in their search for feminism, with the difference that Esperanza found a few collective and women only spaces to belong to, feel supported and where she found significant women who shared her experiences.

One of the collective spaces where Esperanza found a significant woman as a teenager was a youth group from the Church of England. In spite of not being a women only space and not explicitly feminist, they were promoting critical engagement with the church challenging patriarchal practices. There she found a woman a bit older than her who shared her aspirations in the sense of becoming; providing inspiration, company and support.

It was just a group of us who wanted to develop thinking about what it meant to be a Christian or to think about religion generally. We called it 'Shameless' in a challenging kind of way. [...] in fact one of the things we really pushed forward [...] for there to be female servers in the Church. I and an older woman [...] we two became the first female servers in [our] diocese. So, it's always been a bit pushing forward with the whole gender thing.

This social space is meaningful in her narrative as it provided a source of stories from other women who were different, like her, and who were challenging gender roles in society, specifically in the church. Paradoxically, this happened in an institution that by tradition is patriarchal. However, this was during the 1970s, therefore I argue that the Zeitgeist and feminist movements of that time also played a role in what was happening in the Church of England at that time. The other issue I consider significant is that this encounter occurred in a collective space which contributed with a sense of belonging to a collectivity and a safe space for experimenting. There Esperanza began to engage in women's struggles for inclusion and equality, learning and sharing experiences with others in dealing with patriarchy.

Later on, as a young adult, when working as a teacher, she observed how gendered schools were and how readily gender discrimination operated there. She became more engaged with gender equality and women's issues as part of her activism, indicating that the late 1970s and early 1980s was a '*very political time*' and feminist movements were present and influential occurring '*all over the country*'. She described her growing interest;

In my work, I became aware that there were requirements, differences between men and women, opportunities, the pay thing, women were really... It was very much in keeping with the feminist movement [...] all the issues there I was interested and took on board. [...] it was just a kind of meandering into something that I felt quite passionate about. [...]. [I] become more of an activist, as you can see I remain a bit of an activist in the [Union] and passionately so.

In her 20s, after teaching for a few years and working with underprivileged young people, Esperanza became engaged in feminist politics as part of her growing awareness of gender differences and discrimination. She started a women's group in the early 1980s with some work friends and then they opened it up to other women, as she expressed 'I became part of it [the feminist movement]'. In this group she encountered significant women, who contributed to enhancing her feminist subjectivity in a collective and women only space.

This collective way of organising, typical of 1970s feminism, contributed to raising awareness in terms of women's personal lives as well as producing political activity (Charles 2015; Hughes 2012; Lovenduski and Randall 1993), and continued through into the 1980s. This experience allowed her to develop a feminist framework by sharing stories of women's struggles with other women and engaging with feminist activism together. This space provided significant others with whom to share resources, common interests and beliefs (hooks 2000). As Esperanza recalled in her experiences,

[I became more politicised] in working with underprivileged young people, I suppose, and alongside that the feminist movement was becoming more audible if you like; and naturally I think fitted into it and became quite active. That's when the [...] women's group was set up, it was just a group of us who met together and said, right well let's..., you know, it was happening all over the country at the

time and so you'd be doing things like Reclaim the Night marches, you know and rallies and making demonstrations outside pornography shops and all that sort of thing.

She continued later saying,

I have done all that, consciousness raising for women, women's group and stuff like that about gender expectations, gender fulfilment..., it was everything to do with feminism and women's movement. It wasn't just burning bras. [...] I think because I was mixing with people, with women.

By offering this quote from Esperanza, I stress the interpersonal relationships that she established with other women, whether face to face, 'mixing with' or making connections. These experiences with significant women provided a space to discuss and politicize women's issues, bringing them into the public space through their feminist activism. Esperanza was collectively making sense of her experiences as a woman and acting accordingly with other women. Following a 'poststructuralist thinking-doing' concept of experiences (Davies 2013), she was constructing her feminist subjectivity through 'thinking-doing' collectively. This 'thinking-doing' collectively through interpersonal encounters with significant women is a distinctive feature of her narrative and Andrea's narrative. This means not only encountering significant women in one to one relationships, but also encountering significant women as part of collective experiences that nourished her subjectivity growth in everyday life. These experiences also provided company, legitimacy and an opportunity to learn how to challenge diverse expressions of patriarchy together.

In summary, Esperanza encountered significant women that contributed to the construction of her feminist subjectivity in her mother and other women in collective spaces. Esperanza's mother was a key figure that provided women's stories of struggle with patriarchy and encouraged her free development. Esperanza had also experienced the presence of significant women in a feminist group that provided a collective space to pursue women's interests. These experiences of Esperanza are similar to Andrea, and they contrast with the experiences of most of my participants, who had patriarchal families or traditional families in terms of gender roles and no experiences of being part of groups in women only spaces. The encounters

with significant women in feminist spaces and the sense of belonging to a collectivity of feminists through interpersonal relationships is a less frequent experience among my participants. Nevertheless, this sense of belonging is possible to find in the 'imagined sisterhood' some of my participants constructed with significant women by reading about them, as discussed in the next section.

Imagined sisterhood, encounters with significant women through reading

In this section, I address how feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to 'significant women', but this time through 'imaginary' encounters mainly reading about them. These significant women found in texts are figures from history, female characters, women writers, activists or feminists from both current and past times; non traditional women; ordinary and extraordinary women; women novelists and philosophers who reflected on women's experiences, struggled to follow emancipatory paths and resisted patriarchy. For instance, some of these significant women are Mary Wollstonecraft, Josephine Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, Andrea Dworkin, Maya Angelou and Tony Morrison, just to mention a few (see Figure 13 Imagined sisterhood). Interestingly, these women who inspired them are not all necessarily self declared feminist. But the point I want to make here is not how 'much feminist' these women writers and women's stories are. Instead, I want to highlight that these women's stories stress the capacity of women to resist prescribed ways of being female in society and identify diverse ways of struggling with patriarchy. This idea also links to my inclusive definition of feminisms that involves self identified and non self identified feminists. This is why I argue that these significant women stimulated the construction of feminist subjectivities in my participants. These significant women represented different ways of being a woman through a plurality of possible feminisms and ways to challenge patriarchy in its various manifestations. These significant women have informed my participants' subjectivities formation through an imagined bond that could be with one

specific woman, such as Simone de Beauvoir, or with collectives of women, such as the suffragettes or women in the French Revolution.

I argue that these women writers, characters and historical women are regarded as 'significant others' by my participants. With these 'significant women' they constructed an imagined relationship, a bond that I have conceptualized as 'imagined sisterhood'. I define 'imagined sisterhood' as this imaginary bond with 'significant women' based on shared interest, belief and resources in the context of the struggles against patriarchal cultures. I follow hooks' approach (2000) to sisterhood based on 'shared interests and belief' in order to end sexist oppression, as a form of political solidarity between women who appreciate difference and learn how to dialogue together (2000, 43-67). Hooks (2000) refers to sisterhood in the context of feminist movements and not to subjectivities as in my conceptualization. I acknowledge the historical origin of 'sisterhood' in 1970s Anglo American feminism and the critiques that were raised especially by black women and women from other minorities as seemingly erasing differences among women (Predelli and Halsaa 2012; hooks 2000). As Audre Lorde put it in the 1980s, the concept was based on the idea of 'common oppression' and 'shared victimization' (hooks 2000, 44, 64), which was 'a pretence to a homogeneity of experience' which 'does not in fact exist' (Lorde 2007, 116). Nevertheless, hooks (2000) has vindicated the use of it as necessary for a united feminist movement, by addressing and 'working through hostility' and acknowledging differences (hooks 2000, 66). The concept sisterhood has been used by Predelli and Halsaa (2012) as a 'strategic sisterhood' to research the 'building of dialogue, cooperation and alliance' between women of different backgrounds, specifically majority and minority women's organisations which make up part of feminist movements in Europe and UK (Predelli and Halsaa 2012, 27). My conceptualization of 'sisterhood' is related to the construction of feminist subjectivities, by emphasizing an intimate imagined relationship between a woman (my participants) and significant women encountered through reading. I use the idea of 'sisterhood' because of the bond of intimacy that is constructed emotionally and intellectually. It does not presuppose homogeneity of experiences; on the contrary, it is open to a plurality of voices and experiences that provide

stories with resources and knowledge to help my participants in their struggles in becoming feminist.

I suggest that this imagined sisterhood contributed to the construction of the participants' feminist subjectivities by providing stories of women's resistance to patriarchy, feminist knowledge and a sense of belonging to a collectivity of feminists and non traditional women. In this case, it is an 'imaginary collectivity' in the sense that there is no face to face contact. Nevertheless, the stories, ideas and experiences of these significant women accessed through reading are as important as interpersonal relationships because they have impacted on the lives of my participants resulting in consequences in their course of actions. I also claim that the way this imagined sisterhood is constructed implies a dialogue across differences and generations. From these examples outlined below, I stress the differences in terms of social positioning whether of class, ethnicity or location in time and place, for instance in the case of Andrea regarding African American writers, Gabriela with historical women and Virginia with female philosophers, as is developed later here.

The stories and ideas of other women accessed through reading have been mentioned as an important part of the experiences of becoming feminist by some researchers (Ahmed 2017; Hercus 2005; Middleton 1993) or as part of the respondents' experiences (David 2014; Sisterhood and After project 2013¹⁰). Ahmed directs attention to the materiality of books that she conceptualises as 'companion texts' (2017, 17). In this section, I explore these issues emphasising the connection with the women inside and/or behind those books, especially their stories and experiences. I focus on the imagined relationships my participants constructed with these significant women and how these women contributed to the construction of my participants' feminist subjectivities. These imagined women's stories are relevant because their experiences, thoughts and struggles provide meaning for my participants in becoming feminist. In this regard, Ahmed herself for instance writes how significant Audre Lorde had been for her, how the words

¹⁰ Oral History of Audrey Jones, educator (2013) in Sisterhood and after project, topic Education. The British Library. <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/girls-in-formal-education>

'coming out of her experiences' 'found' her, and 'reach' and 'teach' her (2017, 12, 240). This intimate connection, emotional and intellectual, is what I want to highlight in the construction of feminist subjectivities in the case of my participants. This connection between a woman, who reads another woman's story, has been approached through the idea of interpellation (Brah 2012). Brah, an Asian British academic woman, felt 'interpellated' reading the story of a white working class English woman. Despite the differences of experiences of this author and the woman of the story she read, there are 'affinities' and memories activated; she felt 'connected' and 'hailed' by this woman, as she states, 'Jean unexpectedly entered my universe [...]. Today we "inhabit" Southall together as she "lives" in the intimacy of my memory' (Brah 2012, 22). Similarly, as developed later, my participants have felt interpellated by these significant women they read who contributed to their feminist subjectivities.

An important issue that permeates the narratives and the bonds of imagined sisterhood are temporalities. As developed in the introduction of the thesis, life stories have different temporalities involved. There is the time of the narrative, a nonlinear time associated with the ways the narrator chooses to tell the story, where past and present are interwoven. It also involves chronological time, a linear time where events and encounters can be situated historically (Horsdal 2012). In this section, when analysing the 'imagined sisterhood' my participants constructed with significant women, different temporalities come to the fore. The stories, thoughts and experiences of significant women have a linear temporality as their arrival in the stories of my participants occurred situated in a historical, linear, diachronic time. However, on the other hand there are nonlinear temporalities present in the encounters, the connections my participants make with these significant women by reading. These intimate encounters occur in a time without time, in synchronicity, in a nonlinear time where past and present melt together, where the present and past of my participants is connected with the past and present of significant others in a text.

Despite the fact that all my participants mentioned some significant others encountered through reading, for the most part they are less vital in their subjectivity constructions. Therefore, I will focus on the three core narratives

that seemed to have been affected most by this process of imagined sisterhood.

Identified through thematic analysis, I have given emphasis to the narratives of Andrea, Gabriela and Virginia as for them this imagined sisterhood played a crucial role in building their feminist subjectivities. The connections that they made with the significant women they encountered through reading provided my participants with the resources to make sense of their lives as women. These encounters were mostly the product of self directed reading and inquiries but sometimes made up aspects of a formal academic courses. This search for women's experiences and stories is an ongoing interest in the lives of my participants.

Figure 13 Imagined sisterhood: women in history, authors and books mentioned by participants

	Postwar Era							Neoliberal Era							
Before	45	1950	55	1960	65	1970	75	1980	85	1990	95	2000	2005	2010	15
Fatima al-Fihri (Unkown-880 CE)															
Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)								85 French, M. Beyond Power				04 Lucas & Woodin, Green Alternatives to Globalisation			
Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845)			Nadine Gordimer (books 1953-12)				77 French, M. Womens' room								
			63 Plath, S. The Bell Jar									00 Klein, N. No Logo			
Josephine Butler (1828–1906)							Mary Daly (books 1968-2006)					02 Klein, N. Fences & Windows			
Caroline Norton (1808–1877)							Andrea Dworkin (books 1974-2004)					04 Klein, N. 'The Take'			
Barbara Bodichon (1827–1891)												07 Klein, N. Shock Doctrine			
Kate Chopin (1850–1904)						73 Rowbotham, S. Women's Consciousness, Men's World,								14 Klein, N. This change everything	
						72 Rowbotham, S. Women, Resistance and Revolution									
1892 Gilman, C. The Yellow Paper					69 Rowbotham, S. Women's Liberation & New Politics									13 Sandberg, S. Lean in	
						70 Firestone, S. The Dialectic of Sex				90 Wolf, N. Beauty Myth				11 Banyard, K. Equality Illusion	
Melanie Klein (1882–1960)						70 Millet, K. Sexual Politics									
Brent-Dyer (1894–1969), The Chalet School						70 Greer, G. Female Eunuch				90 Riot Grrl					
														13 Benn, M.	
Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)					Maya Angelou (books 1969–2013)									What should we tell our daughters?	
					Toni Morrison (books 1970-2015)										
	49 de Beauvoir, S. Second Sex				66 de Beauvoir, Les Belles Images										
Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)								Dale Spender (books 1980-)							
Simone Weil (1909–1943)															
Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)						Spare Rib (1972-93)	80/83 Educaitng Rita (play/ film)								
						76 Hite Report Female Sexuality									

Imagined Sisterhood beyond differences

Andrea's core narrative, together with her biographical timeline (Figure 11 Andrea's Biographical Timeline) provides details of the authors and books she read. As said before, she is a postwar generation teacher in her late 40s, and was a prolific reader especially as a child, at Sixth Form College and university. As a teenager she began to read about feminism, as she declared, *'reading a lot of the American literature and stuff that was around at the time'*, and also having some 'Spare Rib' Magazine copies around. When she went to university she had already defined herself as a 'feminist' and said that 'some of my modules were feminist, gender studies, literature and things like that'. Most of her readings were personal exploration, 'self directed' as she said. She read feminist thinkers, activists, and novels from women authors that I argue provided resources to the construction of a feminist subjectivity. The imagined sisterhood experienced by Andrea is interesting as it shows a dialogue across ethnic differences in the case of the novels and stories from African American women writers, she being a white English woman from a working class background. Andrea's quote above illustrates this issue, how she felt 'interpellated' (Brah 2012) by the stories of these African American writers. Moreover, it also shows how the stories of these women resonate and remain as permanent figures of inspiration for Andrea, as significant women in her life, and therefore I argue as part of an imaginary bond of sisterhood, a sisterhood beyond differences; a dialogue across ethnicity, race and continents that Andrea built through her readings.

In the end probably the authors that have stuck with me are more fiction writers than actual writers about feminism. I read Dale Spender, Andrea Dworkin, all those kind of people, I've read all their stuff. But people like Toni Morrison [...] although those stories are fiction, a lot of them are based in reality and they [are] ordinary people confronting extraordinary things and making them work. That's something I think you can work with, you can say, okay I can try and do something like that as well or try and make that happen. Some of the other stuff was a bit too abstract and theoretical for me. I could see what they were saying and to be honest I thought 'yes, you are absolutely right but what can I do with that? I can't do anything with that! So, I have quite a practical approach to things. So yes, real stories, Maya Angelou, those sorts of people, [...] they were true stories of her life. So, these role models of women that have despite everything have still risen up and done stuff, they're

the ones that really stick with me. (Andrea in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

Within this quote, Andrea explained the ways in which these women authors, activists and feminists provided a variety of ideas, a diversity of stories about women's struggles, a plurality of feminist voices and frameworks to understand her experiences and the world around her. From this body of feminist knowledge, she extracted a practical knowledge that contributed to the construction of her feminist subjectivity. It is an everyday life feminism, one that resulted in being useful in her experience, as she stressed, they were 'ordinary' women doing 'extraordinary things'; it is a practical knowledge for an everyday feminism. These feminist frameworks (Middleton 1993) that Andrea found useful refer to knowledge that is applicable to her everyday life, but also is a 'knowledge for', characteristic of a 'feminist praxis' (Stanley 2013) in terms of being able to illuminate her actions. Accordingly, this imagined sisterhood has consequences in her life in terms of providing a feminist way of knowing that contributed to delineation of courses of actions and pathways to explore. This implies strategies and resources to deal with patriarchal practices. In that sense, these imaginary bonds with significant women writers, thinkers and feminists are as 'real' as their interpersonal relationships. Despite not being face to face, this 'imagined sisterhood' elaborates into a significant relationship that stayed as a permanent accompaniment to her life. This 'imagined sisterhood' Andrea built with several authors has inspired and encouraged her feminist thoughts and actions. These stories of resistance and emancipation are incorporated in her horizon of possibilities, in her repertoire; they provide frameworks and reference points in becoming a feminist. They are not 'just stories'. These stories matter to her sense of self and belonging, these women's stories stay with her, make her think and act in a different way. I am not saying that is a causal relation, the only source of building subjectivity; instead I argue that these stories of these significant women in this 'imagined sisterhood' are an important influence for the construction of her feminist subjectivity. Particularly, in Andrea's case, the imagined sisterhood is one of the multiple resources from which she drew on to build her feminist subjectivity, as she also drew on the interpersonal relationships and collectives, as discussed in the first section.

Imagined Sisterhood across time

In this section, I illustrate another kind of 'imagined sisterhood' through Gabriela. Gabriela's narrative was presented in chapter four, including her biographical timeline (Figure 8 Gabriela's Biographical Timeline) with women in history and authors as part of her 'imagined sisterhood'. As identified before she is a postwar teacher in her 60s. She was interested in strong women from her childhood. She initially searched for women in books in the school library to understand her experiences with her patriarchal father, and founded Briffault's text 'The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins' (1931). She began to be informed and politicised about women's issues as an adult, reading the women's page in newspapers and hearing Radio 4 'Women's Hour'. Later on when she went as a mature student to university, she read about women in history, feminism and did her dissertation on Mary Wollstonecraft. For Gabriela, the 'imagined sisterhood' established with several women in history and women authors is relevant for her subjectivity construction, as they provided a framework to understand her experiences, connecting personal and political. It illustrates how this imaginary bond is a dialogue across time in the sense that she refers to women in the past who were significant for her. These women she found in history lived under completely different historical circumstances. Nevertheless, their struggles with patriarchal cultures at those times generated an imagined bond with Gabriela. This 'imagined sisterhood' provided a sense of feminist company and belonging to an imagined feminist collectivity that she did not find through interpersonal relationships. This sisterhood with women in the past is a source of inspiration for her everyday feminism and activism; it provided examples and a context for her own struggles with contemporary patriarchal practices. Moreover, the academic knowledge about women and feminism provided a framework to understand her past experiences of protofeminism and her early feelings of 'something wrong'. As an adult, Gabriela fully developed a feminist consciousness (Ahmed 2017) and reaffirmed what she had known as a girl albeit being experiential and non articulated at that time. She explains,

Part of my university studies took in women's issues and feminism and I started reading a lot of academic books from the women of the 'second wave' feminist movement, American women, British women and I became completely grounded in feminism and

realised that I had been right all my life. (Gabriela, in her late 60s, postwar generation, retired)

As mentioned before, the bond Gabriela constructed with significant women in the past illustrates a dialogue across time and space. This shows how the experiences of women in the past are still relevant to contemporary women's experience. Gabriela's way of making sense of herself in connection with the past is interesting as it contrasts with a characteristic of neoliberal times as living in a 'permanent present' (Hobsbawm 1994). This 'imagined sisterhood' across time illustrated also a different temporality, where past and present are imbricated and actualized in the telling of her life. Gabriela is making sense of her life experiences in the light of historic women's experiences, as she stated in the following quote,

Sexism, misogyny only affect women. So, we are on our own unless we speak up. Who is going to speak up for us, and if not now when? I don't want to go to my grave thinking I should have spoken up. I don't care how much it cost really in retrospect. I don't care what people think of me. Women in the past have gone to their graves not knowing how much they did in their own lives and how much was going to be fulfilled maybe centuries later. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, and people like her, and Christine De Pizane, all these early feminists. We still talk about them and discuss their ideas. And you know, we stand on their shoulders. I am a very small individual with no..., you know, nothing other than being a human being, a woman myself and speaking about my own society. (Gabriela, in her late 60s, postwar generation, retired)

This sisterhood across time connects past and present women's experiences regarding their struggles and strategies. This 'imagined sisterhood' constitutes an intellectual and affective bond with those women of the past who sustain and motivated her. Her knowledge about historical women, especially in British History, have been very important and influential in her thoughts and actions as she expressed, 'I have been inspired by other women. Other women and people who have spoken about women's experience. They inspired me and changed my life'. Here, similar to Andrea experiences, these imagined bonds have consequences in my participants' lives, these women's stories matter. Gabriela expressed that those experiences of women who resist patriarchy in the past gave her perspective about women's rights and struggles, as follows,

The knowledge that such women existed in the past, in such for them terrifically difficult circumstances, I am so admiring of their courage and the tenacity with which they held onto those beliefs that certain things were wrong and that was their reason for carrying on. And sometimes they didn't succeed and it was up to other women to carry it on but I think it's, particularly for women today to realise that the journey for justice and equality may very well not be seen in their lifetime. (Gabriela, in her late 60s, postwar generation, retired)

In conclusion, Gabriela's experiences of imagined sisterhood contributed to the construction of her feminist subjectivity taking into account women's stories of struggles and resistance; contributing with feminist knowledge to understand her experiences; providing her with feminist companions for her activism, a sense of belonging to an imagined feminist collectivity and constructing a dialogue between past and present, connecting women's experiences and struggles against patriarchal regimes at different times.

Imagined Sisterhood as a real companion

The core narrative of Virginia has been presented in chapter four with her biographical timeline (Figure 9 Virginia's Biographical Timeline) along with some of the women writers and books she had read. Virginia, a teacher from the neoliberal generation in her 30s, read prolifically as a child, teen and young adult woman. As a child she used to pick up ten books each week from the local library and choose them herself. At age nine, she had an adult's reading level. Women's stories interested her whether powerful or outstanding women, women who were not the 'norm', women who resisted patriarchy, historical women, feminist women and emancipated women from different places and times, 'I realised I look for women' and 'pick up books about women's experiences'. These women's stories 'stimulate fantasies of imaginary futures' in a similar way to what Middleton evoked in her teen years when reading *Spinster* by Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1993, 190). She got interested in women in history and where women played a significant part as in the Spanish Civil War, women in Communism, and women in the French Revolution and the Antislavery Movement, for instance. As she stated, 'I was very aware of the history of feminism and I liked History at school and absorbed history, as in cases when women had sort of asserted themselves, and where the vote have come from [...]. Queen Elizabeth I fascinated me because she was a woman'. In that sense, she searched for inspiration 'to

proceed on a path less trodden' (Ahmed 2017, 17) through these significant women in 'imagined sisterhood'. Some of the women authors she read later on were Simone de Beauvoir, Simone Weil, Sylvia Plath, Naomi Klein, Caroline Lucas, Luce Irigaray, Naomi Wolf and Isabel Allende. She also wrote an academic dissertation on Simone Weil as an undergraduate and postgraduate student. For Virginia, I argue that this 'imagined sisterhood' played a core role in her subjectivity construction, as these significant women were her companions and inspiration in her search for alternative ways of being a woman. She had no feminist friends and despite her mother, auntie and grandmother all being well educated, they were not particularly feminist. Furthermore, she did not experience women only spaces or feminist collective spaces.

The knowledge that Virginia extracted from her 'imagined sisterhood' with some women thinkers is not only a way of conceptualizing women's experiences, it also provides a knowledge that relates to reality, a knowledge based on experiences. Therefore, I argue she found a knowledge based on women's experiences, which connects theory and practice as she emphasised in the following quote and which can be related with 'poststructuralist thinking-doing' (Davies 2013), where the sense of self is connected to others and the world,

I pick out books that tell me about women's experiences, I pick out books that tell me about strong political [women] or women thinkers. Partly because I feel that all the way through my education we so often just looked at men; we looked at the history of men, the theology of men... [...] I was aware it's male history. It's more that, you know, I couldn't look to somebody to be a thinker for me [...] I need a woman to be a thinker, as well as all the men. It's really important! I need Hannah Arendt, for example, to just know that women can think to that level. I need to know of Simone de Beauvoir's impact because she wasn't just talking about philosophy, she was talking about women, their rights, society AND philosophy which made it a living philosophy; her explorations of women and bank accounts in *The Second Sex*; [...] I haven't read very much philosophy but when I do, I see it as something in the world. We are trying to understand the world and if we make it too abstract, it doesn't mean anything. If we see it in our lived experiences, then that's much more important. (Virginia, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working).

These women thinkers provide 'a living philosophy', a way of 'thinking-doing' and a way to be 'in the world' as women, contributing to Virginia's feminist

framework in understanding her own position in the world. This knowledge, despite philosophical, is framed by Virginia in a way that stressed the everyday life, therefore I read it as everyday life feminist knowledge. In addition, her 'imagined sisterhood' illustrates a dialogue with feminists of other eras such as de Beauvoir (1908-1986). Interestingly, she connects with a feminist considered as part of early 'second wave' feminism. Being young and from the neoliberal generation, she felt interpellated (Brah 2012) by a woman of another generation. This illustrates the 'imagined sisterhood' as a dialogue across time, similar to Gabriela. Moreover, these women thinkers appeared crucial for her feminist subjectivity as she remarked several times the 'need' for these women to reaffirm her possibility of becoming a woman in a different way, a feminist way. It is a condition for her sense of self as a woman to have those significant women around. Her subjectivity constructed in relation to this 'imagined sisterhood' is sustained by these 'sisters' that nurture her with their ideas, struggles and non traditional pathways. They open a space to develop a feminist consciousness, in terms of providing different frameworks to understand her experiences as a woman and to understand women in society. This also links to the classic mantra in feminism that 'the personal is political'. A woman's experience is not only an individual issue, it is the experience of a subject located in society. Therefore, each woman author provides a critical account of how a gendered subject, located in a specific social space and time, thinks and lives through that.

For Virginia, finding someone that explains a preoccupation that she had is reassuring, 'a relief'. She found someone with whom to share 'interest and beliefs' (hooks 2000). She found her thoughts articulated in the writings of these women. This happened when referring to de Beauvoir's novel *Les Belles Images* where she felt interpellated (Brah 2012) by 'this idea of illusion and how actually if you question it, or perhaps my mind was already been questioning it anyway, and then to feel it reflected in the book was almost a relief, it is actually a concept.' She found there something she did not find in her interpersonal relationships. She found her way of thinking articulated in those writings; she found there her voice written by another woman. Furthermore, these ideas had a significant impact in Virginia's life, as she realized she should be studying Philosophy in order to discuss these ideas and proceeded to change degree. Therefore, the thought and experiences of these significant women through an 'imagined sisterhood' had a transformative meaning for her life.

In addition to the link between knowledge and experience, is the link of feminism and issues of social justice more broadly and how women engage with that. Virginia mentions her readings of Naomi Klein; she read all her books, and comments about how Klein 'engages with the world'. What she has found in Klein's books is a way to understand the world critically from a woman's perspective, to question the norms and things taken for granted in society and more broadly raise questions about humanity and social justice. Referring to Klein and her books Virginia told me, 'her issues are very physically in the world; the climate change book, This Changes Everything or there is The Shock Doctrine and capitalism and essentially she is describing those scenarios but within a living experience, and I think that's really important'. What Virginia emphasises here is the connection between Klein's writings and ideas, with the 'living experiences' of Klein as a woman. In that sense, Virginia is reflecting on a knowledge linked to the experience of being a woman and connected to the practicalities of the world.

In summary, what I see in the 'imagined sisterhood' experienced by Virginia is a steady presence of significant women, their thoughts and stories, which contributed to building up her feminist subjectivity as a woman. These women's stories and thoughts broadened her understanding of what women could do in society, how to be in the world as a woman and to search for alternatives ways of being a woman. Her 'imagined sisterhood' forms a crucial resource for the emergence of her feminist subjectivity especially taking into account that she has less feminist company in her interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed how feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to significant women. I have done this by drawing on four core cases based on a thematic analysis. All of them are similar regarding how they constructed their subjectivities in relation to other women, 'significant women' they encountered in their lives. These encounters happened in interpersonal relationships and/ or through an 'imagined sisterhood' by reading about exceptional women in history, novels or women writers, thinkers and feminists. These significant women contributed through their stories of struggles for emancipation and helped form feminist frameworks to

understand the world and provided a sense of belonging to a collectivity of feminist and non traditional women.

Regarding significant women encountered through interpersonal relationships, I have used the cases of Andrea and Esperanza to illustrate how they encountered these women from early on and throughout their formative years, feeding the construction of their feminist subjectivities. In both narratives, their mothers were key figures in terms of providing resources, support, inspiration and legitimacy. In the case of Andrea, her feminist mother passed over her own life story, how she dealt with discrimination and her everyday knowledge regarding women's issues; Andrea had a first hand experience of what a feminist and feminism could mean. Esperanza, similarly, had her mother's encouragement to explore different ways of being a woman and develop diverse interest and tastes. Esperanza also had access to her mother's own life story of gender discrimination. Andrea and Esperanza had encountered significant others in friends, peers and colleagues. Both had experiences of collective and women only spaces where they also encountered significant women as companions for their interest and searches. What is interesting is that all the significant women they encounter, through their early and later formative experiences, contributed to enhancing their 'toolkit' (Ahmed 2017) of resources to deal with patriarchy. All the stories of these significant women are resources they accumulate and which contributed to constructing their feminist subjectivities; these 'tales of significant others' were 'the fundamental shapers' of their own life stories (Plummer 1995). These significant women contributed to their development and create a sense of companionship that other narratives do not have, as in the case of Gabriela or Virginia, whose journeys seemed lonelier in terms of interpersonal relationships.

All my participants have had the influence of significant women through reading, in more or less meaningful ways, as an 'imagined sisterhood'. Nevertheless, this 'imagined sisterhood' took on greater significance in the construction of the feminist subjectivities of three participants, Andrea, Gabriela and Virginia. Through their narratives, I have illustrated how the 'imagined sisterhood' was a real companion for them and contributed to feed their feminist subjectivities. Their experiences of 'imagined sisterhood' showed that they were not alone in this search for alternative ways of being

a woman, they demonstrated the different paths that could be followed, and they inspired them with their attainments and examples. These significant women provided hints, resources and strategies to deal with patriarchal practices at different times. They provided a variety of feminist frameworks to make sense of their experiences and the world. They contributed to the construction of a feminist subjectivity and made them feel part of an imagined collectivity of non traditional and feminist women in search for emancipation. This 'imagined sisterhood' provided a repertoire of women's stories of resistance to patriarchy, struggles for emancipation and alternative ways of being that had transformative meanings and had real consequences on the lives of my participants. Likewise, this 'imagined sisterhood' showed dialogues across differences, times and generations of women in order to construct their feminist subjectivities. This dialogue illustrates how my participants constructed and belonged to an imagined collectivity of plural and diverse feminist women. Finally, this 'imagined sisterhood' illustrates how different temporalities are involved in the construction of subjectivities and the participants' narratives both across linear and nonlinear times.

In the following chapter, I proceed to analyse how the feminist subjectivities of my participants are further contributed to and actualized in particular settings and times, such as the pedagogical and activist arena resisting the patriarchy of neoliberal times.

Chapter 6 Everyday feminist subjectivities in neoliberal times, pedagogical and activist engagements

Introduction

I have argued in the previous chapters that feminist subjectivities are constructed through narratives in a relational way to events in time (chapter four) and to encounters with significant women through interpersonal relationships and an 'imagined sisterhood' (chapter five). In this chapter I suggest that feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to what my participants *do*, in other words, to the ways in which they actively engaged with the world and those lived experiences. Specifically, this points to the ways in which they unfold their subjectivities through the practice of their pedagogical and activist work in the present and recent past. Drawing on literature reviewed in chapter one, I use a feminist poststructuralist conceptualization of subjectivities that puts experience at its core in the sense 'that it is experience that results in a subject or subjects' (McLaren 2002, 61). I think about subjectivities also as part of the realm of 'doing' rather than 'being' as Lawler states for her conceptualization of identity and where the question is 'how we achieve identity, under what constraints and in what context' rather than 'who we really' are (Lawler 2008, 101,104). These ideas connect with the rejection of the fixed Cartesian self, shared by many feminist perspectives and Foucault (McLaren 2002). Consequently, I approach subjectivity as a process in which there is no separation between thinking and doing, what Davies (2016) refers to as 'poststructuralist thinking-doing' avoiding binary conceptualizations. For me, what my participants think is part of what they do in terms of their subjectivity constructions, and their subjectivities are constructed and reconstructed in what they do. Therefore, what these feminist teachers do is not insignificant, their pedagogy and activism matters in terms of informing the shape of their feminist subjectivity.

During the chapter, I also highlight the sociopolitical moment in which my participants narrated their lives, that of the neoliberal era. This means that their subjectivities are constructed in a present that is located historically and has influenced them. My participants' pedagogical and activist engagements occur in the context of a society with old and new patriarchal practices, and where there is a 'coalition of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism' (Phipps 2014) as explained in the context chapter three. In addition, the present time of each of my interviews refers to a moment in their lives that varies, in terms of the point in their life course in which they are, some around their 30s (neoliberal generation) and some more mature in their late 40s, 50s or 60s (postwar generation). These different temporalities also play a role in the way they construct their subjectivities, mixing the linear direction of biography and history with a synchronic present of their subjectivities.

I also argue that the way in which my participants narrated their lives regarding their pedagogical and activist engagements under the neoliberal era shows how they construct an everyday feminist subjectivity. Their narratives are not heroic ones in the traditional sense of masculine heroes (also discussed in chapter four); rather my participants are very aware of the restrictions of neoliberal rationalities on them and the limitations of their actions. In that sense, they are far from the completely free subject of liberal discourses that I associated with masculine heroic narratives. Their freedom is located in a structured landscape (Simons 2013) and that forms a significant part of their accounts. The context in which the subjectivities of these feminist teachers is enacted through pedagogy and activism could be described as 'landscapes of antagonism' where 'dynamic neoliberal projects and shifting feminist politics encountered each other' (Newman 2013, 211). At the same time, their subjectivities are not constructed as victims' narratives in the sense they are aware and use their possibilities for action, 'working the spaces of power' and showing 'complex entanglements between different commitments and struggles' (Newman 2012, 7-8). In other words, they do not construct victims' narratives, which seem to me to be closer to deterministic discourses where domination occurs without space for resistance. In that sense, they composed non binary accounts; they construct feminist subjectivities which are not completely free, but also not completely dominated by patriarchal discourses.

Nevertheless, I focus on their resistance on the micro level. Through their lived experiences and engagements in pedagogy and activism, they construct a feminist subjectivity that found space to manoeuvre, thereby pursuing 'everyday resistance' or 'protean resistance' (Butz and Ripmeester 1999), enacted in the 'little territories of the everyday' (Rose 1999). This resistance can be 'oppositional' and 'off kilter resistance'; the latter means those everyday resistance practices that are non oppositional, 'often ambiguous practices that productively circumvent power, rather than actively opposing it' (Butz and Ripmeester 1999, 1).

The chapter is organized in two sections, one related to the participants' pedagogical engagements and the second more briefly related to activist engagements, especially in the teachers' unions. In the first section, I analyse the way in which their feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to how my participants became teachers, their educational frameworks, the way they experienced neoliberal educational regimes and its effects on teachers, the spaces of power they worked in and the micro resistances they enacted. The second section of the chapter examines their activist engagements in relation to their feminist subjectivities emphasised in their involvement in unions, but not exclusively. In this chapter I draw on a thematic analysis of the interviews, both from the first and second rounds, with the fifteen participants who are described in chapter two, Methodology.

Feminist subjectivities, pedagogies and micro resistance

In this section, I focus my attention on how feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to the pedagogical engagements of my participants as their ways of acting in the world. Their pedagogical work is used to illustrate how they engaged 'in practices of freedom' (McLaren 2002, 54) and at the same time, ways in which they are restricted by 'material, institutional, and disciplinary matrices' in order to construct their subjectivities (op cit., 3). This is not an evaluation concerning to what extent their classrooms or pedagogies are feminist, nor do I want to identify specific feminist pedagogical practices per se, or what makes a classroom feminist. It is instead, an examination of their pedagogical 'thinking-doing', as part of the

construction of their feminist subjectivities. This is analysed through pedagogy as a way of engaging in the world and making sense of themselves in neoliberal times.

In order to illustrate these processes, I focus on their narrations about why they became teachers, their conceptions of education, the ways they experience the current neoliberal educational system as well as its consequences on them, and finally how they navigate and resist neoliberal patriarchal practices in the professional space.

Feminist subjectivities and educational conceptions

All of my participants showed a strong political commitment towards ideas about social justice; similar to the feminists studied by Weiler (1988). These ideas were expressed in relation to a number of themes, including gender equality, social class, race and ethnicity, and LGBT issues. Their educational conceptions are related to this strong sense of social justice, which they connected especially to issues of gender and class. Many of them had experienced some kind of discrimination as feminist teachers (Coulter 1995; Joyce 1987; Middleton 1993; Weiner 1994; Weiler 1988, 2003), or difficulties arising from their childhood, and therefore their teaching is related to those lived experiences. As stated in the introduction of the thesis, all of my participants are feminist according to my definition, which is an inclusive one, following Walby (2011) and hooks (2000). Most of my participants self identify as 'feminist'. However, some of them prefer not to be labelled as feminist, despite their reasons are related to the complexities of the notion of 'feminist' and the multiple meanings attached to it in current times. Their stances are not a rejection of feminisms as a political project, nor are intended as the appropriation of postfeminist sensibilities.

For some of my participants, their choice to join the teaching profession was on the grounds that it intrinsically had a political dimension to it by being a vehicle for gaining change and improvement for underprivileged groups. In that sense, most of them connect their feminism with broader preoccupations of social justice and gender equality. I link this conception with an 'oppositional knowledge' that is produced by oppressed groups and contributes to their 'survival' (Hill 2012). Becoming a teacher is a 'strategic election' (Kabeer 2001) that was already in itself a political act, a decision

that reflects their way of thinking about the world and their commitment to act in it. Andrea for instance, whose story I have presented in chapter five¹¹, changed from her initial job to teaching at a time when she already self identified as feminist. She 'was looking for something that had more meaning, [...] more impact' than the job she had, where she could not pursue her politics, realizing that teaching had that potential,

I was always political but I didn't really know what I was going to do with that. I tried to do something else that wasn't political but I wasn't very happy. So I thought I'm going to do something that is essentially political and then I'll find other people like me.

And she continues explaining,

My impulse was in small politics, changing peoples' lives, that kind of politics. [...]. I thought in teaching I would be able to possibly have an impact on young people's lives, and kind of improve things. It was an idealistic mission! (Andrea in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

Her politics is part of her sense of self, her subjectivity. Her profession is an important part of her being in the world and enabled her feminist subjectivity to flourish and develop through what she does. Similarly, Rosa, a teacher in her 30s, from the neoliberal generation, also a self declared feminist, had an idea about teaching influenced by her own sociology teachers when she was a teenager. As shown in the following quote, her concept of education is coherent with her feminist politics and worldview as follows,

There's so many issues in society that need to be addressed, and if I can get that through to young people by teaching Sociology, then that's probably the best way to do it. Because most of the young people in our school in particular, aren't very political, so if I can make them political whilst getting an 'A' Level at the same time, then that's sort of the best combination for me.

When asked what political meant for her she added,

Predominantly, [it is] about feminism and understanding the position of women in society. I think a lot of females in particular don't realise that... life is not fair for most women. [...] Particularly the students that I work with are very middle-class and [...] I don't think they really understand how the world works [...] I think, anything to do with inequality is political, and they just think that it's

¹¹ See Andrea's biographical timeline in chapter five.

not to do with politics, it's to do with the individual. So that's why I really like teaching them Sociology; that actually there is an element of the individual, but also there's other forces that are going on that are also shaping your life, and you need to be aware of them. If you don't like them, you need to change them. (Rosa, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

Here, I see how teaching is already a political act in terms of contributing to understanding the world, where a connection between power, knowledge and action is established. For Rosa, there is a need in current neoliberal times to make young people aware and critical of the world in which they live, including awareness of inequalities and gender inequalities. For her, teaching allowed her to push forward her interest in changing society, challenging patriarchy and other social injustices. Rosa's thinking-doing is operating here and shows how her sense of inequality and her feminist subjectivity is connected to others, to the world and not only to herself. She has a sense of the social and the collective, something that in neoliberal times is not a mainstream idea (Gane 2014). Another issue that I highlight, that is similar to other participants, is how gender justice is connected with other injustices in society, and her commitment to challenge and change that through her teaching. It is similar to the work for social change done by progressive women teachers in the research of Casey (1993). In addition, teaching has been described as one of those professions that is meant to be engaged with the world. Virginia¹², a neoliberal generation teacher, conceptualizes this as 'how to be in the world', which means that she did 'not only want to discuss, but also wanted to act in the world'. This sounds to me a very practical definition of what politics means, an everyday way of approaching politics through teaching. It is in keeping with a form of doing feminist politics, beginning from the personal to connect to the social (Zerilli 2015).

For my other participants, teaching became significant through the experiences of doing it. They realized then how they enjoyed it and the potential and the power they had in the classroom to contribute to the children's development from a feminist perspective. My participants' conceptions about education echo what hooks calls a 'liberatory pedagogy' following Paulo Freire's work, where the 'will to know' is connected with 'the will to become' (1994, 22). This, my teachers see as being achieved through

¹² Virginia's narrative and biographical timeline has been developed in chapter four.

wanting their pupils to grow and to fully develop, without gender restrictions. The knowledge they want to promote is also knowledge for action that includes gender dimensions. This idea is part of 'a feminist ontology, a way of being in the world', based on the idea that 'the present social construction of women [...] is oppressive (Stanley 2013, 14). This ontology is central to my participants' subjectivity construction and reconstructions in their pedagogies and critical engagement with the world. For instance, Juana emphasised the need to encourage girls to develop 'other skills as well, [such as] joining in discussions' and 'arising [their] voice in class'; Andrea said, 'You have to prepare the child for the world'; Luisa was concerned that the 'children learnt something' instead of only passing exams; similarly Rosa expressed her preoccupation about the children having an 'awareness of the world'; or like Virginia who wanted that children became 'evaluative thinkers', 'to engage critically with the world' and use 'opportunities [...] to open a discussion on those things [gender issues]'. In addition, Gabriela, whose narrative was presented in chapter four, teaches them how to question the newspapers differentiating between 'facts and opinions', to 'open people's eyes, especially the young women in schools, about their own history'. She stressed the need to be critical towards gender discrimination and to challenge gender stereotypes in her classroom when teaching her pupils,

Gabriela: There was a lot of banter in the classroom often.

Heidi: Banter?

Gabriela: In a conversation between the girls and boys and one of those remarks could be, a boy would say to another boy, 'Don't be a girl' in a disparaging way. Or 'you are acting like a girl' in a putting down kind of way. I would challenge them and say to the boy 'you should be so lucky, you are acting like a girl, you should be so lucky to aspire to be some of the girls in your class'. Turn it on its head, challenge that remark. Misogyny, which is not challenged, becomes normalised and I wanted them to know they could not make misogynistic remarks in my class. (Gabriela, postwar generation teacher in her late 60's, retired)

For all of my participants, education means much more than passing exams, being associated rather more with the development and critical engagement of children with the world and notions of social justice including gender equality. These educational conceptions are clearly different from the dominant discourses in the current neoliberal educational system. These teachers' feminist frameworks and feminist experiential knowledge permeate

their educational conceptions. Moreover, they are very aware of the differences and conflicts this carries. They have to negotiate in their everyday working life how to deal with those conflicting views. The following quote from Andrea shows how she is very aware of the distance between her personal conceptions and what the system requires; she also presents a very interesting way of handling those differences. Moreover, her testimony illustrates how she felt the pressure of the system, but at the same has an 'ethical thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) as a woman, feminist and teacher. This can be seen in what Andrea told me,

It's a matter of balancing. You don't want to disenfranchise the children or disadvantage them if there are exams they need to do and things they need to know and so on. Of course you're not going to be stupid about it, but there are ways of delivering what they must have in a way that can at least give them something of what they need as well.

And she continued later on,

As a teacher, I'm paid by the government, and I have to deal with the expectations of the parents. So I have a responsibility, okay, but I also have a responsibility to the child. That's my position. Of course I will do my job properly and I will be professional and fulfil my contract. There's no question about that... And equally I will respect the background and the wishes of the parents and so on. But to ignore the child in that process is just wrong, it's just WRONG! And so I will be sensitive towards things but I won't ignore a question or I would not present a child with something that challenges them because somebody else wouldn't present it. They have to deal with a very complex world, so it's no good me pretending the world is the way everybody is pretending it is. You have to prepare the child for the world. (Andrea in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

I consider this as a good example of the always present 'tension and contradiction in life, between what one is compelled (externally and internally) to think-do, and what will be ethical thought-action' (Davies 2016, 6). Therefore, any kind of discrimination in her class, including gender discrimination, was challenged, coherent with her feminist subjectivity. She was also very aware of the restrictions that a neoliberal education is having in her school as part of a bigger climate of 'conservative and retrograde' times as she expressed, what I associate with the spirit of neoliberal times.

Most of the teachers interviewed expressed this distance between their personal conceptions and the values of their schools in neoliberal times. All of them dealt with a level of conflict in this respect as they negotiated and found 'room to manoeuvre' (Day et al. 2000) according to their specific situation. For instance, here Luisa expressed how she dealt with some of the requirements in contrast with her personal principles,

As a head of faculty, my strength is to support my colleagues and build a good team. But my weakness is dealing with all the data, and that what's important in my school, is how I deal with the data, so that's a problem for me also. To manage the two expectations and the pressure that the children have to get this grade and that grade, etc. and I would naturally be more worried about 'Have the children learnt something?' But no, it's about 'what they have achieved'. (Luisa, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

Here Luisa shows how her 'ethical thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) conflicts with the demands of the neoliberal educational system. She juggled with different educational frameworks but felt more engaged with children's needs and team work; in that sense she is enacting non oppositional micro resistance and, at the same time, dealing with neoliberal rationalities. Similarly, Virginia (aged 31), whose narrative was presented in chapter four, expressed that her 'way of teaching is out of date' in contrast with the predominant ideas in schools and government educational policy, acknowledging what Ball (2012) addressed as changes in the 'ethos of teaching'. She got upset and angry because of 'how things are going in education' nowadays. Again, she is aware of the distance between her conception about education and the neoliberal education system in which she teaches. Virginia wanted her students 'to think, not only to learn facts'. She wanted them to 'became evaluative thinkers', which means for her to learn 'how to think and engage with the world, how to be ethical, how to look after the world'. Clearly, her personal trajectory and thinking inform her teaching, in a way that indicates that there is no separation between her thinking and doing.

These findings problematize some research that states that 'dominant organizational discourses [...] colonize worker subjectivities' in a way that there 'is no longer a difference between workers' conceptions of self and that offered within the organizational discourse' (Jacques 1996 cited in Thomas, Mills and Mills 2004, 1). I argue that the processes involved in subjectivity

constructions are much more complex, nuanced and shifting. In the case of my participants, they are able to construct different conceptions of the self, feminist ones, despite some levels of compliance with dominant discourses, contradictions and struggles. The visible difference between their educational conceptions and those of their neoliberal institutions is indicative of their resistance. This does not imply subjectivities as fixed positions and acknowledges that they are imbricated with neoliberal rationalities. Here, the complexities and multiple layers of subjectivity construction show its contingency and fluidity. There are some hints that some aspects of my participants' subjectivities are complying with neoliberal constructions of the subject and a neoliberal educational system, despite this not having been the focus in the present research. My participants resist dominant discourses up to a certain point. They negotiate their feminist subjectivities as much as possible in the context of the schools and policy demands as the former quotes showed. This also illustrates the ambivalences of the construction of subjectivities in a neoliberal era and how that includes the 'dialectic of freedom and constraint involved in the process of subjectification' (Thomas, Mills and Mills 2004, 6).

There are some overlaps with what Pereira (2017) states regarding 'practices of pushing and pulling of boundaries' in the case of academics engaged in Women's, gender and feminist studies in the context of higher education. In the process of constructing feminist subjectivities, my participants seemed to be engaged in similar 'movements of approximation/distance' (Pereira 2017, 202) regarding patriarchal discourses and neoliberal rationalities in educational settings. Despite my focus being on practices of resistance to patriarchal discourses in schools, I acknowledge the impossibility of not engaging at all with the dominant practices and discourses in the educational arena. These movements and relative positioning of my participants are contingent, negotiated in different times and spaces in the educational arena.

Feminist subjectivities, lived experiences of neoliberal educational system and micro resistance

All of my participants have been teaching for the most part or exclusively under neoliberal regimes; only three of them have taught before the 80s (see 'Historical Timeline' in chapter three and general characterization of the participants in chapter two). They have been impacted upon by the

neoliberalization of education and society. As with many feminist teachers, they have faced restrictions and difficulties (Coulter 1995; Weiner 1994; Middleton 1993; Joyce 1987). Nevertheless, in current times the specificities of their struggles are related to the impact and scope of neoliberalism on every sphere of the life of individuals and society (Gill and Scharff 2011). Specifically, education has been transformed by neoliberal policies (Compton and Weiner 2008) and has produced a 'regime of performativity' that is ensured from outside by 'regulations, controls and pressures' but also from 'inside out, colonising lives and producing new subjectivities'; this regime also 'generates identities disciplined by targets, indicators, measures and records of performance' (Lyotard 1997 and Ball 2001 cited in Ranson 2008, 5). This is another kind of pressure and scenario in which to construct a subjectivity, particularly a feminist one, considering the presence of 'postfeminist sensibilities' (Gill 2007) that refer to contradictory discourses around feminism, denigrating it and accepting some version of it. This adds complexities to the scenario, as seen in chapter three.

Interestingly, my participants neither live those restrictions and difficulties as victims nor heroines. Instead, I suggest that they resist to be constructed as neoliberal subjects, and that is part of their feminist subjectivities. Their narratives stressed their lives as everyday women who struggle through their pedagogies to be ethical subjects and to think-do something that is coherent with their feminist 'oppositional worldview' (hooks 2000). They are aware of, and experience restrictions, but they face and deal with them carrying out what they consider their duty as teachers. This moral duty is framed in terms of their values and beliefs about social justice, gender equality and feminism that are not separated issues and that are part of their educational frameworks, as explained in the former section. One issue that appears clearly in all the narratives is the strong awareness and concern relating to the neoliberal reforms in the educational system. This awareness shows in the way that they process a range of restrictions to their pedagogy, the curriculum and their workplaces, and based on that then respond to the pressures of the educational system. For example, Gabriela's words below are drawn from her reflections on the conditions of teaching prior to the National Curriculum which was introduced in 1988 and the shift shown after

that period as the full force of neoliberal regimes began to be felt¹³. She critically highlights the personal costs for many teachers, the lack or decrease in 'choice and creativity' (Ball 2012) because of the increasing centralised control on content and pedagogical approaches. These issues are indicative for me of the ways in which neoliberalism disciplined and produced subjects and how it influenced subjectivities. Gabriela is aware of these issues despite the fact that she did not frame them as neoliberalism as explained in the following quote,

I've seen full time teachers at the end of their career being completely burned out. When my son went to school [around 1985], after ten years the teachers had a sabbatical, a paid sabbatical. They had a lot of time to read and explore their lives and even teach their own subjects in a free way. But I found that the pressures of work and the way the government was organising education to press down on teachers, to reduce their opportunities to devise their own curriculum and to institutionalise how they taught, what they taught. [...] It was becoming more and more profound. (Gabriela, in her late 60s, postwar generation, retired)

What is salient in Gabriela's case is that when she began to teach in the 1990s she decided to do it only part time. She already had a sense of schools prior to that having been a governor in her children's school while she finished her studies as a mature student at the university, and came to identify as a feminist. She emphasised the need for freedom in her life, which I link with her feminist subjectivity and a general critical stance regarding her 'thinking-doing' approach. As she expressed in the following quote,

I was only interested in part time teaching, because I knew that teaching for me was sort of all consuming and I could not do full time. It was too much to do... with my family as well, and I wanted time to read and research and be on the ball for my students, so I enjoyed it! I wanted to enjoy my work!! And didn't have pressure to work full time and therefore get paid full time. So I had that freedom that is very important in my life. (Gabriela, in her late 60s, postwar generation, retired)

I read her decision to work part time as a way to have more space to manoeuvre as a woman and mature teacher, who was also a mother of two children. She recognised she was going to be part of an educational system

¹³ See timeline in chapter three.

which put pressure upon teachers affecting all spheres of their lives. In her case, she positioned herself from the beginning in a way that allowed her more degrees of freedom and space to negotiate the pressures, an issue that I discuss later in this chapter when referring to her ways of resisting patriarchal practices in a neoliberal educational system. The restrictions imposed on teachers and their subjectivities that Gabriela identified, such as the control over the curriculum and pedagogical approaches, were also addressed by other teachers. Esperanza, another postwar generation teacher still working, expressed that diversity, in terms of teaching approaches, is not encouraged, and that inequalities are not a topic of interest in current educational policy, 'Mr Gove¹⁴ doesn't want individual teaching styles! [...] I don't think [he] is interested in discrimination in the classroom, or tackling it, or improving those sorts of issues'.

Several teachers pointed to the restrictions that neoliberal reforms brought in terms of reducing the space and relevance, in the curriculum, for subjects and topics that might develop a broader social, historical and cultural literacy in the development of feminist knowledge and feminist politics amongst school pupils. As my participants acknowledge, there is no institutional support from the government or the schools in terms of providing spaces to address and discuss inequalities, gender discrimination, feminism, and women's contribution to society. Andrea stated, for instance, that the inclusion of feminism or gender issues is just a formal requirement, a legal duty rather than an educational commitment that implies actions and resources, 'the only reason that gender issues are even tackled in schools is to do with individual teachers. [...] there is nothing apart from a commitment to gender equality, the Equality Duty, it is called on paper'. In addition, Gabriela mentioned the changes in the History curriculum in comparison with the earlier parts of her career stating that 'for a long time there was a subject which was taught in schools called Women's History [...] but now that is not seen as being appropriate [...] [It's] part of the backlash against feminism'. Tellingly, she remarks that such subjects are not now seen as appropriate to the education of young people, as there is mainstream ideas that state that 'women have it all now, equality.' Despite the advancements of past decades, the preoccupations of 'second wave' feminist educators have come back, the invisibility of female experiences and the dominance of men's

¹⁴ Secretary of State for Education between May 2010 and July 2014.

knowledge, worldviews and standards at schools (Spender 1992). I associated this situation also with the prevalence of a 'postfeminist sensibility' (Gill and Scharf 2011), and the prevalence of neoliberal and neoconservative discourses (Phipps 2014), which permeate all spheres of English culture and society, as discussed in chapter three. In this political climate, these teachers struggle to bring those topics into the curriculum and at the same time struggle to confront everyday sexist practices in schools. Therefore, I suggest that their feminist subjectivity is constructed through enacting resistance to those patriarchal discourses and practices.

Similarly, neoliberal generation teachers remarked their experiences of concern and frustration regarding the inclusion of gender equality and feminist issues in the curriculum. As they articulated, these topics are exceptionally considered in the syllabus of some subjects, but as a minimum measure. For instance, Virginia, who teaches Philosophy, illustrates how the inclusion of gender and race is down to tokenism that reinforces male supremacy of thought. As her words convey, the professional autonomy that she is allowed is very restricted through requirements to cover set topics. Her feminist politics and worldview is imbricated in her pedagogy and how feminist subjectivity is constructed. She remarked how 'important' it is to have women in the curriculum for her and for her students in terms of possibilities of being, as she stated,

Only in passing, only in short comments like saying, 'Wow, you've got through a year and a half of A level and now I can introduce you to some women that thought', and I have to sort of emphasize that. We don't have much time. I can give three lessons to it, one to each woman, that's it, done. Out of all the lessons in a whole year, that is all we can give. That's where the lacking is [...] where do women look for these people? Where do women particularly look for thinkers? [...] that is really important! That is what I struggled with because thinkers seem to be men because we have their thoughts given to us all the time and women haven't had the opportunity throughout history to write their thinking and their logical, rational thought. It's missing. [...] They are not put on the syllabus and the occasions when somebody is, it is much more, 'Oh we need to put a woman here; Oh we need to put a black writer here'. It is very much like that. Considering the syllabus has all changed in the last year [2015] there is still no reference to women'. (Virginia, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working).

For Rosa, another neoliberal generation teacher, the pressure on exam results made it difficult to find the time to provide a global perspective on feminism, despite the topic being on the A-Level Sociology curriculum. What she wanted to bring into her classroom is a more comprehensive understanding of feminism, not only as something that happened in the past, but as a movement for gender equality that despite some achievements still has not fulfilled its goals, as she expressed.

I find quite difficult at times, because there are articles that I can give them, evidence that they can look at that I can link very clearly to the specification for our exam board. But I want to make it bigger than that, but we just don't have enough time to give them a global perspective on feminism. (Rosa, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

All these quotes showed the absence or marginal presence of women and gender issues in the curriculum, confirming the prevalence still of a gendered and male dominated curriculum (Coffey and Delamont 2000; Weiner 1994) and the power of the curriculum in terms of knowledge production and the construction and reproduction of a social reality (Apple 2004; Young 1971). These issues are an ongoing struggle still in 21st century UK. For instance, recent media covered the battle that feminist teenage campaigners and the feminist movement have had to maintain feminism as a topic in the A level Politics syllabus (Bates L. 2016 The Guardian). Shadow MPs stated that the decision to take out feminism as a topic 'sent the message that gender equality is not a priority' (Sherriff L. 2015 Huff Post, HPMG News). These issues are part of what my participants resisted in their everyday life as feminist teachers. As resistance to these diverse expressions of patriarchy is a permanent struggle in their everyday experiences, I suggest that micro-resistance is part of their feminist subjectivities.

Despite all the restrictions my participants faced under a neoliberal educational system, they still found 'spaces of power' (Newman 2012), where they can exercise their feminist 'thinking-doing' (Davies 2016). In that sense, their classrooms are still 'a location of possibility' (hooks 1994), a place to enact their feminist subjectivities and to encourage their pupils in their own processes of becoming whatever they want, without being restricted by their gender, class or any other social distinction. They think of themselves as teachers with some possibilities to promote change, for opening views, for having a critical approach to the world and an ethical one. In that sense, they

also connect to the aims of feminist and critical pedagogy (Crabtree, Sapp and Licona 2009; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2003; hooks 1994; Gore 1993; Luke and Gore 1992; Weiler 1991).

Furthermore, I argue that these feminist teachers engage in micro-resistance as part of their everyday life in their classrooms and schools. Their resistance is located in their normal practice including the ways of delivering the curriculum, challenging it, and also through everyday practices which are part of the hidden curriculum. I distinguish here between differing types of resistance directed at a range of diverse issues encountered in everyday life and how these affect the construction of subjectivities, resistance to patriarchal practices, resistance to neoliberal policies and resistance to being constructed as neoliberal subjects. Resistance to diverse patriarchal expression includes resistance to a male dominated curriculum, to everyday sexism and misogyny, to the challenge of gender stereotypes and gender discriminations. Resistance to neoliberal education is not necessarily framed in that way and generally takes the form of resisting what they call 'bad education policy'. Resistance to being constructed as neoliberal subjects points to how the participants elaborated their feminist subjectivities as women that can act and have an 'impact in the world' as Andrea said, or 'make a difference' in Juana's words. But at the same, this resistance includes each woman's awareness of the restrictions they faced, and therefore the small scale impact that their actions could have in the context of neoliberal society and neoliberal educational system. These varying objects of resistance are combine in different ways and in different levels of significance by my participants.

In addition, most of them also resist through 'off kilter practices of resistance' or non oppositional resistance (Butz and Ripmeester 1999), as it seem that in recent decades, direct oppositional resistance is not always possible for teachers in terms of the sustainability of their actions. In spite of this, Andrea remarked that there is a tradition of resistance in teaching, and despite the National Curriculum there is a variety of strategies in which patriarchy can be challenged in the classroom, as she expressed here,

Teachers generally have always been very good at subverting what they do [...]. You can practice equality in the way you treat the children and [...] have strategies in class that ensure the active involvement of all the children [...] Then you've got the content,

...all the examples that you give...; ...the topics that you chose;
...the way that you look at different characters. (Andrea, in her late
40s, postwar generation, working)

She is referring here to the opportunities that arise daily both in and around the curriculum. Another example in the same direction is what Rosa told me regarding her pedagogical style and how she deal with the systems, as follows,

I'm quite bad at being target driven [...] how I teach normally is not necessarily always how I teach when I'm being observed. [...] because the pace of my lesson when I'm being observed is quite – (laughs) it's very different. Normally, I would be like, oh, that reminds me la, la, la. (Rosa, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

Another example, which is quite illuminating, refers to how two teachers dealt with the same restrictions in the curriculum. It is the comparison of two participants, one from the postwar generation, Gabriela, and the other one from the neoliberal generation, Virginia, whose narratives were analysed in chapter four. Both were teaching the same syllabus in History, therefore I illustrate here their different ways of resisting a sexist curriculum; Gabriela in an oppositional way and Virginia in an 'off kilter way'. What is also interesting is how they negotiated their feminist subjectivities through their pedagogical practices in the classroom, bearing in mind their different life experiences, ages, backgrounds and positioning at the time of being confronted with this situation. It is possible to see how their subjectivities elaborate and process the restrictions, and the different strategies they used to achieve micro level resistance. Gabriela described the situation as follows,

They were going to base the curriculum on Jack the Ripper!¹⁵ [...] I couldn't believe my ears that they were going to sensationalise Victorian life and make it more like The Sun readers would see life in its garish, sexist, misogynistic way [...] and I spoke out against it and said it was the completely wrong way of bringing those pupils into the knowledge of Victorian life and that this would be very detrimental to the girls to be categorised as victims [...] I suggested in fact, if they wanted to alter the curriculum, they should involve

¹⁵ Name given to a killer never caught of five or possibly six women in the East End of London in 1888.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/ripper_jack_the.shtml

the work of maybe Josephine Butler¹⁶, who campaigned against prostitution in the 19th century and people like Elizabeth Fry¹⁷ and Barbara Bodichon¹⁸ and people like that. [...] No, they weren't interested at all. So they went ahead with that and this... I did rebel quite a lot. When I was in the classroom I never taught that. I will concentrate myself on the more positive aspects of Victorian Britain and bring out the work of these women and others as well. (Gabriela in her late 60's, postwar generation, retired)

In the case of Virginia, she negotiated this situation a little differently as she told me,

I taught Jack the Ripper because it's on the syllabus. [...] I used it as a way of exploring issues about women as victims, but also we did look at why men might seek to attack women to include that kind of thing, so I used some modern male murderers to compare. So we did do a little bit on that, which is difficult! At the same time I also did Annie Besant¹⁹ and the Matchstick Girls, which is an East London story as well – the first strikes against pay and conditions took place at the Bryant and May matchstick factory. It was mainly girls who worked there and Annie Besant helped and supported them. She was a journalist and she wrote about them and their strike. (Virginia, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

Here I see different ways of resisting the National Curriculum and diverse forms of negotiating a feminist subjectivity in the context of each school. In addition, I see how actively the teachers operate as 'curriculum developers' (Kincheloe 2005), and how this engagement is entangled with their worldviews and sense of self. In other words, how their subjectivities are constructed and reconstructed through their pedagogical work. I consider that this difference is not strictly related simply to the different generations to which they belong, but also relates to other issues. Gabriela challenged the syllabus using oppositional resistance. She explained her actions in terms of the freedom she had because she was not expecting any promotion or

¹⁶ Josephine Butler (1828 - 1906), British social reformer, who played a major role in improving conditions for women in education and public health. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/butler_josephine.shtml

¹⁷ Elizabeth Fry, (1780- 1845) British Quaker philanthropist and one of the chief promoters of prison reform in England and Europe, especially concerned with female prisoners. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-Fry>

¹⁸ Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), English leader in the movement for the education and political rights of women who was instrumental in founding Girton College, Cambridge. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Barbara-Leigh-Smith-Bodichon>

¹⁹ Annie Besant (1847-1933) British social reformer, campaigner for women's rights and a supporter of Indian nationalism. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/besant_annie.shtml

further steps in her career as she was near retirement; she did not rely only on that salary and was a part time teacher. In addition, she was a mature person and teaching was her second profession, only begun in her 40s. All these aspects allowed her to be freer in the way of approaching teaching and to be in a better position to be oppositional. It is also possible that she was less threatening for her schools as she was not putting her challenge to the system further than her individual pedagogical work, and despite the fact she was unionized, she was not an active member of her union. Gabriela, even in comparison with her generation, acted in an exceptional way regarding the kind of resistance she used in her school.

On the contrary, Virginia's way of dealing with the restrictions was much more subtle, she taught what was prescribed but she made the difference in the way she delivers the curriculum, bringing in a feminist point of view, problematizing the topics, making connections and opening the space for discussion. In terms of the relations of power, the position of Virginia is weaker than that of Gabriela. Virginia is a young teacher in her 30s, with 8 years in the profession and with expectation to progress in her career. She found herself in a difficult position to challenge the curriculum which she expressed commenting 'I am a young teacher'. What I want to highlight here is that both women faced a curriculum permeated by patriarchal practices in neoliberal times. Both enacted their feminist subjectivities through their pedagogical approaches to this sexist curriculum. Both resisted in different ways, Gabriela in an oppositional way and Virginia through 'off kilter resistance'. I do not interpret their different ways of resisting as generational differences, as oppositional resistance in schools is not frequent among my participants. Most of the teachers of both generations used non-oppositional practices of resistance, using the fractures in the system as opportunities, especially in the classroom.

It seems that in neoliberal times, oppositional resistance of teachers has been displaced to the space provided by the unions. The kind of resistance enacted by teachers seems more related to the specific political and historical context in which they are acting and to the specific ways in which they are located in those contexts. Direct oppositional resistance appears less possible and unsustainable for my participants in neoliberal educational contexts because of several changes. For instance, teachers are under more vulnerable working conditions, being questioned in terms of professional

identity and moral integrity (Kelchtermans 2006), in the context of the 'intensification' of teachers' workloads (Apple 2013; Hargreaves 1994). Additionally, under neoliberal regimes, oppositional resistance is very risky and hard to achieve because teachers have lost spaces of power and representation. With neoliberal educational policies, local educational authorities have lost power (Royle 2012) and unions have been undermined under neoliberal regimes (Visser 2006 cited in Walby 2011).

Another example of the ways in which my participants practice resistance is regarding the neoliberal education, which also has implications on their feminist subjectivities as illustrated in the case of Andrea. As she specified, 'part of what we're doing is resisting bad education policy in schools, and trying to prevent damaging things happening as far as we can'. She explained her actions in a way that connects what she does with what she thinks and with her subjectivity. She is critical of the educational system because of her educational conceptions that place the child first, as presented earlier in this chapter, and she does what she considers ethical, which in this way constructs a sense of herself and a coherence to the ways she engages with and experiences the world, as follows,

Andrea: I am still a middle manager. I don't intend to become a senior manager. I could have gone further off but I don't.

Heidi: Why?

Andrea: Because the current system of education is flawed, in my opinion. [...] if I become a senior manager, I have to be part of making that work and I don't want to make that system work, because I don't think it is right. I would have to do things that at the moment I don't have to, because I am a middle manager. If the education system was different, I'd be quite happy to be a head teacher, if I believed in what I was doing.

Heidi: In which ways do you disagree with the current system?

Andrea: The whole testing system, the whole... this obsession with showing progress every day. I don't think it gives the children the space to learn and develop properly. I think it's teaching-to-the-test and the only way you can keep making those kinds of improvements is either teach so narrowly that it has no meaning, or to bully or harass people and I don't want any part of that. From my position at the minute I am able to be quite creative. I am able to deliver a meaningful education, within the poor system, as far as is possible. I can try to ameliorate the situation for the children. But

I'm not in a position where I'm having to discipline members of staff or teach all kind of...; it's just about manageable – it's not perfect, but I can live with myself at this level. (Andrea in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

I interpret her rejection of rising up the hierarchy as an 'off kilter' resistance to neoliberal policies in schools and also as a way of making sense of her everyday experiences and her subjectivity construction. In this quote, her feminism is not explicit, but it is embedded in her pedagogy as presented in this chapter and in her narrative in chapter five. In a similar way, Cyndi, a neoliberal generation teacher, expressed her criticisms to the system and the ways she dealt with it by not compromising her sense of herself. She is critical of what education is currently for and does not give up her own educational philosophy. In that sense, she constructs a subjectivity in resistance to mainstream society, which is something shared by all my participants and which I link with the critical dimension that feminism involves. She told me what she does and the reactions she gets,

Cyndi: I'm quite critical of the educational system, to be honest.

Heidi: In which sense?

Cyndi: Just what it kind of has become [...] With my subject in the course for instance, [...] you don't ever get a lot of time so you are just learning for the sake of learning and exploring things. I'm always under pressure to meet some deadline, to produce the numbers and I get sick of that and I get sick of management, and management making decisions with no knowledge of what actually is going on in the classroom and on the ground. I don't like that side of it at all and I quite often question that side of it. I voice my opinion on that.

Heidi: How is it received?

Cyndi: [...] they generally don't listen. I have been told previously by my line manager not to be so vocal, [...] not to speak my mind so much, might get me into trouble. But I've got to the point in my job now where I don't care so much about being careful, being quiet and keeping my head down. (Cyndi, in her 30s, neoliberal generation, working)

Her overt critical stance to the educational system can be read as an act of oppositional micro resistance. She linked her actions with her general stance of 'challenging authority' and 'the whole idea about being critical about society and doing things for yourself', connected to her punk family

background and her involvement in punk culture and music. Moreover, I link this with the ways in which she delivered the curriculum in her classroom, using non-traditional and creative tools such as for instance assessing her pupils' topic knowledge based on zines²⁰. Her pedagogical style and stance is for me an expression of her way of resisting neoliberal education, in this case perhaps less oppositional, more an 'off kilter' resistance. In addition, this way of doing pedagogy and facing management is part of her feminist subjectivity constructed in oppositional ways to mainstream values and practices. She exercised her power despite the restrictions and constructed a feminist subjectivity that is enacted as a teacher in a neoliberal educational system. This does not mean that she did not do the exams, but in parallel she did other things that make a difference. Her ways of delivering the curriculum could be assimilated to what is called 'mediation', which points to the active and creative stance of teachers in selecting what to choose from the National Curriculum (Pollard et al. 1994). Bridget's response, on the other hand, to changes in educational policy could be categorized as 'retreatism' that means 'submission' to imposed changes without any changes in their conceptions (Pollard et. al. 1994)

Other pedagogical experiences in which my participants exercised micro-resistance are special educational projects or initiatives. These 'spaces of power and influence' that they managed to negotiate also allowed them to actualize their feminist subjectivities. These practices can be thought of as non-oppositional resistance but is more of a parallel process. These experiences seem less common, mentioned only by three of the fifteen teachers. They are initiatives that varied in scale and time. For instance, Victoria was engaged in a pilot project in her school to challenge gender stereotypes, promoted by her union. In the case of Andrea, she was part of an educational project that explicitly incorporated gender equality as an important aspect of it. These spaces have been developed with like-minded colleagues, doing alliances particularly with people in power or strategic positions. These micro political spaces are nevertheless fragile, because of changing circumstances in the schools and the educational system in

²⁰ A zine (from magazine or fanzine) is most commonly a small circulation self published work of original or appropriated texts and images, usually reproduced via photocopier. Usually zines are the product of a single person, or of a very small group. Zines have served as a significant medium of communication in various subcultures, and frequently draw inspiration from a "do-it-yourself" philosophy. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zine>

general. The example of Andrea is revealing. When I conducted the second interview in 2015, her project was shut down by a newly appointed deputy head who was 'quite macho, very evidence based, content based, traditional', in the words of Andrea, exercising 'hard masculinity' and 'strong leadership' as part of neoliberal educational policies (Blackmore 1999). Andrea was leading and working in this project for several years and looking back she expressed 'that was a luxury [...] to do this fantastic work, I can't believe it because especially in the current climate which is so conservative and so retrograde' and explained that she could sustain it because her project 'was protected by another guy, who did understand and could see its value. He retired'. The situation she described is showing how she resisted with her pedagogical engagement but also shows until what point she was involved when stating, 'I had a very bad year last year', which I interpret as the strong connection in her subjectivity of the personal, the professional and the political. Another example of this kind of space of influence and resistance, but at a different end of the scale is the experience of Juana. She individually led an initiative to challenge the use of language in schools including gender discrimination. This initiative illustrates her resistance to patriarchal practices in the realm of language as part of other discriminatory practices. Here again, as in the case of other teachers, the approach to gender inequalities is imbricated with other discriminations.

I also run a session for new teachers every year about the power of language and why you should challenge it. [...] in Physical Education (PE) in particular, the staff are used to having banter and jokes and a bit of teasing, it is part of the fun of it and people like fun. And so they don't want to give that up. So if they say to a boy, "Oh, you are throwing like a girl" or "Oh, you big girl", [...], that completely undermines any girls that want to play sport. And I say that, and they say, "But it is only a joke"! I say, do you know how many times the girls hear those things and what it does to their self esteem? We are trying to get more girls involved in sport and you are not helping by doing that. [...] People don't like you policing what they say, so I try to address [it] by saying it is not me trying to police what you say, but you can't control how people interpret or the power of your words and what it does. [...] I do those little things and try to make a difference. (Juana, in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

These 'little things' that Juana does in similar ways to all of my other research participants illustrate how she resists everyday patriarchal cultures, resists a neoliberal education framework and resists being constructed as a neoliberal

subject. She acknowledged the intensity of the job, as other teachers did, the cost of these actions for her personal life and her family. She is now doing a master's degree to leave teaching regardless of the fact that she 'loves it'. As she said, 'it's my sort of exit route out of teaching, because teaching is so exhausting and we know we are not going to get our pension until we are 68'. She, like Gabriela, referred to the issue of freedom, which I linked with her sense of being able to negotiate the construction of her feminist subjectivity under restricted conditions, 'I want to have an option. My greatest fear is to be trapped without options... for anything. [...]. I want to keep my options open, freedom. But as you get older your options decrease.' This is similar to other teachers I met who were beginning part time PhDs such as Virginia and Cyndi from the neoliberal generation.

Other teachers had managed not to leave the profession doing it part time as Gabriela, Fatima and Rosemund, or having stopped for a while as Esperanza, and then later coming back. Bridget who had taught full time went for an early retirement and Andrea, who is still working full time, has an exceptional network of feminist and non-feminist woman that support her in addition to her union, in which she is very involved. Therefore, I think that the pressure of the system in neoliberal times contributes with significant difficulties in the case of teachers' feminist subjectivities as the educational arena is one of the spaces in which antagonism and political struggles are enacted very strongly in current times. This issue shows how, for my participants, teaching is too draining under the current restrictions and pressures, expelling the 'brightest teachers' out of the profession (Linne 2001 cited in Kincheloe 2005). Teachers who are 'amazing, life affirming, intellectually challenging agents of a democratic education are viewed as threat by the advocate of standardization in this repressive era' (Kincheloe 2005, 86). These issues are similar to what David (2014, 175) stated for feminist academics as 'anti-pathetical' in neoliberal universities. Additionally, this data can be linked with what Pereira (2017, 217) enunciated as 'ambivalent entanglement' in the 'performative university' regarding complicity and resistance to neoliberal rationalities. Indicative of those ambivalences are teachers' exhaustion and search for 'ways out' of schools, showing how implicated they are in this neoliberal regime and how much they struggle to build alternative subjectivities. These issues demonstrate the nuances, complexities and paradoxes present in the construction of feminist subjectivities and the multiplicity of forms and contingencies of them.

In summary, taking into account the educational conceptions of my participants, how they lived the restrictions of neoliberal regimes in educational settings and how they engaged in micro-resistance and 'off kilter' resistance, I illustrate how they constructed their feminist subjectivities through their pedagogies, in the context of resistance to patriarchal cultures and to an increasingly neoliberal education, as developed in chapter three.

Feminist subjectivities enacted through activism

In this section, I develop how feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to my participants' engagement in activism. Their feminist subjectivities are reconstructed through this practice and negotiated in relation to those spaces and experiences. I focus in particular on the activism conducted in unions in the neoliberal era because this seems the most frequent space for activism among teachers. In these 'spaces of power' (Newman 2012), they engage in resistance to neoliberal educational policies and to patriarchal culture and practices. The unions appear as a space where oppositional resistance is possible, alongside non oppositional practices. Most of my teachers, except two, were part of a union, but the degrees of involvement varies greatly. Four of the participants were school representatives at some point and three of them had other leadership roles. I will focus here on those participants who have a very active role in their unions and had taken leadership roles as school representatives and other roles at local, regional and national level during the neoliberal era. This includes Esperanza, Bridget, Andrea, Juana, Victoria and Rosemund, all of them from the postwar generation. This does not meant that neoliberal generation teachers do not participate, but they act more as members, occasionally joining the activities organized by the union. In terms of resistance, I made a parallel between the lives of the feminist teachers and their activism, as expressed by Mohanty about herself in an interview, that 'radical scholars are made (not born!) and that we are forged within communities and collectives that teach us how to resist the kind of individualized, neoliberal seductions and erasures that result in colonized mind-sets or despair' (Dauphinee 2016, 89).

My participants also engaged with other kinds of activism that varied throughout their lives, took different forms and addressed diverse topics.

Some began early as teens, while others later on; some have stopped while others are still very active. In terms of the forms their activism took, there is individual activism, such as signing petitions or writing to their MPs; engaging with a collective in individual ways for instance joining campaigns or marches; participating in formal and non formal campaign groups; supporting organizations; and doing voluntary work. The topics are related to women's rights, feminism, gender equality, LGBT issues, social justice, class, race and ethnicity, education, pacifist and antinuclear movements, animal rights, environmental issues, migration, children's rights, antiausterity movement, human rights and solidarity campaigns with other countries under conflicts. Regarding gender/ feminist activism, they participated in campaigns such as fighting violence against women, women's rights at work and social justice. For instance, to mention some examples; Gabriela and Andrea participated in antipornography campaigns in 1980s; Rosemund in feminist antinuclear struggles, going to Greenham Common with her daughters in the same decade; Victoria and Esperanza were supporting women from miners during the strikes in the 1980s.

An issue that stands out in the kind of activism that my participants do is that their feminist politics is connected with broader issues about social justices and inequalities. This is coherent with what happened in their educational frameworks discussed earlier in this chapter. What is interesting in terms of the construction of their feminist subjectivities is how that activism is enacted in the present in relation to the past, making different emphasises, connecting 'thinking-doing' in past/present times. This is illustrated in Andrea's account of how her concept of activism changed over time and implied changes in her feminist subjectivity, as shown in her quote below,

I know there are all sorts of radical, socialist [feminisms]. I've kind of moved away from that, I mean, as I've got older, I've become more of a general activist. I suppose I have moved [from feminist activism] into activism for everybody, to do with class and poverty and stuff like that, which I think affects women more, so the feminism is a key factor.

And she continued later,

My input now would be more socialist rather than feminist, in terms of practical trade union strategy, campaigning and international work. A lot of people I am close to now would say they are not feminists, they are socialists and they don't want to be called

feminists. I'm not quite there, I still consider myself a feminist, but I do think that the answer has got to be more than just solving women's problems. I think you solve women's problems by solving all the problems. So I'm kind of more a socialist feminist than I was when I was younger, when I was a bit more feminist radical. (Andrea in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

Despite unions still being male dominated spaces, especially in terms of leadership positions at national level, these feminist teachers have found spaces to develop and enact their feminist subjectivities there. As Andrea explained, 'because teaching is predominantly a female occupation, at local level unions are women's spaces and generally school representatives are women. But after that level, the positions are predominantly males'. Especially in one teachers' union, there had been several efforts to increase women's active presence and visibility; and also give equality issues a central place in their activities. This union has a women's network in which most of my participants were part, including those ones that are only members. They have also conducted a project to challenge gender stereotypes in primary schools, producing several materials that Andrea shared with me in our first interview.²¹ The space of the union is a protective space for women teachers who are resisting neoliberal educational policies. It is a space where oppositional resistance seemed more possible than within the schools or classroom. Andrea, Bridget and Esperanza participated in a union that have supported struggles against neoliberal educational policies and worked on gender and equality issues. Therefore, these women have found in the union space for their activism and to develop actions that are coherent with their values and beliefs as feminist teachers. They have found within the unions some spaces to fulfil their feminist politics and to exercise power.

Esperanza is a very active teacher in her union having different roles at local and regional level. She was a school representative of the union for some years. As she stated, the union was central, especially defending the rights of older female teachers who were under threat in recent years under gendered neoliberal policies, as explained in the above quote. The union is also a place for political solidarity between women (hooks 2000). Esperanza told me in her role of school representative: 'I was supporting my colleagues

²¹ Breaking the Mould, challenging gender stereotypes.
<https://www.teachers.org.uk/equality/equality-matters/breaking-mould>

in terms of dispute and... none of it went to tribunals in fact'. They faced problems with 'an abusive Head', which she explained is part of the policy of the current government,

Is a bully's chart for Heads, really, to be able to move people in and out as she or he sees fit. So a lot of work has been done recently over supporting teachers who have been essentially bullied out of their positions, myself included. I went to a compromise agreement last year, because my Head... I didn't say that if you're a woman and over 50 and if you're at the top of your own pay scale, then you need to be aware that you are going to be encouraged to leave. Early retirement, nice option if you can afford it, I couldn't. A lot of people can't, but then it's the undermining of professionalism and believe me, with the government supporting a lot of these Heads' activities, it's very powerful, very damaging to a number of people. I'm not saying women are exclusive to this, but it tends to be predominately women who are under fire. Up to that, if you are active in your union, you're done. (Esperanza in her late 50s, postwar generation, working)

Regarding the construction of her subjectivity and her activism in the union, Juana described how some of her motivations were connected with past experiences. She described a scene as child where she felt she betrayed her sense of self, and therefore in present times, when she found some difficulties to speak out or do something, she pushed herself forward. She described as follows,

Ever since then, whenever I felt scared to put myself forward I've made myself do it anyway. Which is why I became the Union Representative. I didn't put my hand up [in the classroom as a child] and I never forgotten that. I felt like I wasn't being true to myself. So when I said I would become the union representative, there was no union representative at our school and the Head Teacher was very angry that I want to be the rep. He said we don't need unions here. If anyone wants to talk to me they can come to my door. People were saying to me 'oh it's really dangerous, are you sure you want to do it?', because that is your career over when you become a Rep. I just carried on... and whenever I feel really nervous and had to support a colleague and challenge the Head Teacher I would do it, very calmly, not in an aggressive or conflicting way, trying to be... Those supposedly female communication techniques of making everybody feel happy and always making sure the Head felt good and felt that it was his decision, but nevertheless I achieved what I wanted to. Probably by the time I had stopped doing it he was more amenable to the idea. He was never able to bully me, you see, I was always very reasonable. That given me a huge boost about

how it is, it is very hard actually to stand up and be counted, but it is possible to do it and it is possible for women to do it as well as men. So it has been good. (Juana in her late 40s, postwar generation, working)

It is interesting to analyse this quote in terms of how Juana constructs her feminist subjectivity in relation to what she does, what she thinks, and the links with past and present experiences with her current actions. As a female teacher, she faced the patriarchal structure of her school, the authority of a male Head Teacher and decided to take the role of representative despite his opposition. Juana overcomes her feelings of being 'scared' and 'nervous' and conducts herself in concordance with what she defines as her 'true self', which can be understood as the 'ethical thinking-doing' (Davies 2013) part of her feminist subjectivity. This course of action is informed by all her experiences as a woman, past and present. Here, she is connecting her subjectivity as a girl to her adult feminist subjectivity. In the past, as a girl she was not able to speak out as her 'true self' in front of others publicly; therefore, as an adult woman she pushed her forward to be coherent with herself, constructing a feminist subjectivity. Besides, Juana explains the ways in which she behaved when her colleagues needed her as non oppositional ways of resisting the authority of the Head teacher, which I suggest can be conceptualise as 'off kilter resistance' to patriarchal practices enacted by the Head teacher, in the context of male dominated leaderships. This scene also illustrates how micro-politics is negotiated in the everyday life of a feminist teacher, where her power is exercised in the context of structured spaces and patriarchal hierarchies. It illustrates how she is 'working the spaces of power'. Furthermore, the way in which Juana constructs her narrative is not a heroic masculine story, nor a victim story. She plays her part being aware of the complexities of exercising power as a female teacher and being aware of the cost, to which she had later referred. Her narrative is an everyday life feminist narrative.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have analysed how feminist subjectivities are constructed in a relational way to the pedagogical and activist practices of my participants. It is to be seen as the experiences of thinking-doing in the world, highlighting

their everyday life in neoliberal times. The way in which these teachers built up their narratives about what they do in classrooms, schools and union activism, is informed by the way in which they construct their feminist subjectivities. Their ways of making sense of what has happened in the educational sphere in the last few decades and its impacts is informed by their feminist stances, their values and worldviews. In addition, their subjectivities are linked to their past and present experiences as women and teachers; and the different social spaces they inhabited through their lives.

First, in the pedagogical arena, I have identified how their educational and teaching conceptions and frameworks are connected to issues of gender and social justice in coherence with their feminist subjectivities. In addition, I showed how their educational conceptions are different and in conflict with those educational discourses emanating from their institutions and the government as part of a neoliberal educational system. Then, I analysed the way they lived their pedagogical experiences under neoliberal times. This includes having an awareness of the pressures, accepting some of the impositions of neoliberal policies, but at the same time 'thinking-doing' ethically from their feminist stances and engaging in micro-resistance. I illustrated the restrictions and cost imposed on teachers by the neoliberal educational system in terms of their pedagogy and their personal lives as feminist teachers. Then, I analysed the variety of forms in which they worked 'the spaces of power' (Newman 2012) and enacted micro resistance mostly through non oppositional resistance or 'off kilter' resistance.

Secondly, I have analysed how through their activism they have enacted their feminist subjectivities, focusing on union activism in the neoliberal era. This occurred through individual and collective actions, especially in the teachers' unions which appear for some of them as the only space to engage in oppositional resistance to neoliberal and patriarchal practices in education. Through their activism in the unions, they have pushed forward their feminist politics in connection with issues of social justice in general and particularly with educational issues and their teaching profession. Moreover, I have illustrated how my participants' activism and feminist subjectivities are informed by not only by their present experiences, but also by their past experiences as women.

As a result of their pedagogical and activist engagements, I have argued that their feminist subjectivities are constructed and reconstructed in an endless process of making sense of past and present, personal and political. My participants have constructed feminist subjectivities through their 'thinking-doing' in the pedagogical and activist arena involving micro-resistance to patriarchal practices and neoliberal education. However, it is relevant to consider that the complexities and multiplicities of the process of construction of subjectivities does not mean they reject the system completely. They need to negotiate depending on their circumstances, the moment in their life course and their social positioning. At the same time, it is important to consider that these processes are never finished and continue throughout their lives; this is not the end of the story. Furthermore, in this chapter, their life accounts are circumscribed by their pedagogical and activist practices under neoliberal times. My interest had been to explore the way in which these feminist teachers elaborate the constraints placed upon them by the neoliberal educational system. More importantly, I have assessed the way they responded and resisted neoliberal education, patriarchy and becoming neoliberal subjects by displaying their feminist subjectivities. I have suggested in this chapter that the feminist subjectivities of my participants are constructed in a relational way to their experiences, specifically their pedagogical and activist experiences. Considering the idea that they engage in micro resistance practices in their everyday life, I argue that resistance is an important dimension of their feminist subjectivities.

Despite the focus of the chapter being on micro resistance, I acknowledge the presence of contradictory and ambiguous practices and discourses that imply neoliberal conceptualizations of a subject. In schools, where teachers are subsumed in relentless neoliberal reforms, it is impossible to escape those power relations, as they are entangled in webs of relationships. The participants showed how they resist neoliberal patriarchy, neoliberal regimes in schools and up to a certain point, being neoliberal subjects. At the same time, degrees of compliance are present, as it would otherwise be impossible for these teachers to stay in the schools.

In the next section, I proceed to link together the different chapters and highlight the connections between them. This is in order to conclude with the main findings of this research, including the methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions and the ways forward following this research.

Conclusion

In this section, I wish to draw together some concluding thoughts concerning the construction of feminist subjectivities in the case of English feminist schoolteachers from both the postwar and neoliberal generations. I begin highlighting some of the findings indicating the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of this work to the field of feminist studies and subjectivities. I then present some future areas of research opened up by this study and its findings.

Overall, through this thesis, I have explored the complexity, multiplicity and fluidity of the process of feminist subjectivity construction in the experiences of a selected group of postwar (1945-1979) and neoliberal (1980-2015) generation English schoolteachers. This exploration offers a response to the research question concerning how feminist subjectivities are constructed in the context of dominant patriarchal practices and discourses, how these subjectivities are sustained through life, and with which kinds of support and resources.

My focus has been on the processes of formation of subjectivities throughout my participants' lives, through the connections of personal, political and professional; and through the connections of biographical, historical and social structures (Mills 2000). As exposed in chapter one, the literature on British feminist schoolteachers is scarce and not updated in spite of the resurgence of feminism in the last decades. There is also little research on the lives and subjectivities of feminist schoolteachers, and of the small amount that does exist the concerns are mainly focused on educational and pedagogical issues (Coffey and Delamont 2000; Coulter 1995; Joyce 1987; Middleton 1993, 1989, and 1987; Weiler 1988; Weiner 1994).

For the purpose of this thesis, I have drawn on a feminist poststructuralist framework which informs my conceptualization of subjectivity. This means perceiving subjectivities as relational, multiple and processual (Atkins 2005;

Blackman et.al. 2008; McLaren 2002; Willet, Anderson and Meyers 2015). This is examined through a narrative approach to subjectivities by acknowledging the telling of lives as constitutive of human beings (Lawler 2008; Plummer 1995; Somers 1994). This constitutes a conception of subjects neither fully determined nor fully free (Hughes 2002a; McLaren 2002; St. Pierre 2000); and is in concordance with a relational concept of power that allows resistance and practices of freedom (Atkins 2005; McLaren 2002; Simons 2013). All this starts from a feminist ontology (Stanley 2013b) that assumes the current construction of women as oppressed, and thus informs my epistemological and methodological choices as explained in chapter two.

In chapter two I have also detailed the qualitative approach and methods undertaken. The main source of data was the 'adapted life story', which means a shorter life story interview account with the participant focusing on becoming feminist, through a semi structured in depth interview. This resulted in fifteen initial narratives, followed by a second round thematic interview with five of my participants, which constitute my 'core narratives', where I deepened topics or addressed less developed ones. Through use of a thematic analysis with a narrative approach, I have addressed the relational construction of feminist subjectivities developed in my data chapters (four, five and six) by using different sets of data and strategies of presentation, that is to say, by focusing on my five core narratives in chapter four and five, and combining them all in chapter six.

Methodological contribution: the potential of life stories

A methodological contribution of this research has being the inclusion of an assessment of the method of life story as part of the topics to discuss with my interviewees. In chapter two, 'Methodology', I discussed the potential of 'adapted life story interviews', considering this is a methodological contribution of my research. This term 'adapted life story' interview with a narrative approach, refers to the mixture of life story and biographical narrative; the use of semi structured in depth interview but in a shorter version than compared with traditional life story research. Yet, the potential of the life stories is the link it creates to the emphasis I have put in the whole life; the narrative approach that allows the telling of a life; the openness and

flexibility with which the interviews were conducted; and in the core narratives the possibility of a second round interview. These issues contributed to develop a very rich interview for the purpose of research on subjectivities. As discussed in chapter two, there are several matters that support the potential of the life story interview. Firstly, this kind of interview opened a space for reflection regarding the participants' lives during and after the interviews, as registered in the case of second round interviews. Those reflections also involved being critical regarding what the participants have said, or being aware of the construction that a story implies. Secondly, the interviews allowed space for realizations, a new understanding or meaning regarding my participants' lives. The participants make new connections, constructed meaning for themselves in terms of crystallising an idea or giving full form in terms of the occurrence of an epiphany or revelation. The act of telling a story helps clarify things (Atkinson 2002). Third, the adapted life story interview allowed an assessment to be made in relation to my participants' lives, especially in the case of those teachers near retirement or retired. They evaluated their present in connection with their past, they were reminded of meaningful aspects of their life and that allowed them to articulate a whole image of their lives. Finally, the life story interviews allowed them in some cases to feel recognised and be validated by token of hearing their stories, as pointed by other authors (Atkinson 1998). All these elements have been central in allowing an answer to how subjectivities are constructed. It also supports my argument that this adapted life story in depth interview is a useful methodological tool that could be productive for any inquiry regarding other intimate topics.

Empirical contributions

In terms of the empirical contribution of this research, I have updated and provided material for an under researched area such as the lives and subjectivities of feminist schoolteachers in England. The general findings refer to the relational, multiple and fluid ways in which feminist subjectivities are constructed through the lives of postwar and neoliberal generations of teachers. This focus on their lives allowed me to explore the different dimensions included in the process of constructing feminist subjectivities in detail and in depth. This thesis has provided information about the concept

of an everyday feminism, which I understand as ordinary people engaging in power relations on a day to day micro level, they are not significant public figures or part of the elite. This is relevant within the context of the current Zeitgeist in British society regarding feminisms: the presence in one hand of 'postfeminist sensibilities' in the culture and media (Gill and Scharff 2011, Gill 2007); and in the other the resurgence of feminist activism (Charles 2015; Redfern and Aune 2013). Moreover, it provides an account of how this kind of feminism is possible under distinctive historical conditions in England: amidst the predominance of neoliberal rationality and neoconservative discourses. This contribution is important because of the ways in which neoliberal logics are expanding influences in all spheres of life, including both subjectivities and within the educational arena. Feminist schoolteachers have been impacted on different fronts by neoliberal rationalities and gendered reforms (Arnot 2007; Lambert 2004; Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012; Mahony 2000) as explained in chapter one. This thesis has provided an account of everyday feminism exercised by schoolteachers, which seems less visible than organized feminism, because although it is imbricated with other social struggles, nevertheless it contributes to a day to day 'feminist project' (Walby 2011).

Events in time and protofeminist subjectivities

In more specific terms, my findings refer to the way in which feminist subjectivities are constructed in relation to what I have called 'events in time' as presented in chapter four. My findings indicate that feminist subjectivities were constructed in relation to meaningful events related to the influence of feminist ideas and movements, and events related to experiencing patriarchal practices such as gender discrimination or violence. Here, biographical and historical timelines are connected, focusing on early child and teen experiences and later adult experiences. I have illustrated these issues with the core narratives of Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia, each case showing a different path, a different way of living the influences feminisms and the Zeitgeist of postwar and neoliberal eras. This chapter has shown how historical times are important although not prescriptive in the sense of determining the process of subjectivity constructions. Accordingly, it also showed differences in the processes of subjectivity construction in women who are part of the same generation, as in the cases of Bridget and Gabriela.

The analysis of the narratives in this chapter has provided new insights regarding the construction of feminist subjectivities by bringing to the fore what I have conceptualized as 'protofeminism'. This concept, explained in the introduction and used in chapter four's analysis of Gabriela, Bridget and Virginia's narratives, refers to a set of strong feelings and sensations of discomfort, estrangement, rage, among others, that my participants had as girls or later on when facing gender violence or discrimination. It is an unarticulated 'gut level awareness' of injustice (Jaggar 1996 in Ahmed 2017) that only by looking back at it, is possible to make sense of. This has been acknowledged by Ahmed (2017) in her experiences of 'being wronged' as a girl, and by other authors as 'something wrong' (Hercus 2005; Mitchel 1973 in Middleton 1987). What is salient as a finding is that this gut awareness of gender injustice in my participants' experiences is an early unarticulated state that allows the beginning of questioning the world and the place of women in it. It is connected with my participants' interest in and search for knowledge about the experiences of other women, as well as searching for these explanations in books. This contributed to becoming aware of gender inequalities and other inequalities, as the experience of them and the search for knowledge of them are lived simultaneously. My participants' lived experiences of discrimination are intersectional, including discrimination by gender, class and ethnicity. For example, Bridget and Gabriela lived discrimination as working class and Irish girls, as presented in chapter four. The recognition of inequalities and injustice is a key and formative knowledge moment, as it is a core feature of all of my participants, especially regarding gender and class. Participants' strong engagement with feminist politics and issues of social justice were core in the construction of their feminist subjectivities and their being in the world. In that sense, this protofeminist subjectivity is contributing towards the formation of feminist consciousness and is developing a feminist framework to understand their sense of self and the world around them. Moreover, this protofeminist subjectivity is connected with the exercise of initial practices of micro resistance as girls, which can initially be viewed as unimportant, yet contribute to building up the capacity for further and more consistent resistance, as shown in Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia's narratives.

Counter narratives to patriarchal practices and discourses

Another finding of my research that I would like to highlight here is the construction of counter narratives to patriarchal discourses as part of the process of building feminist subjectivities. As examined in chapter four, the accounts of Bridget, Gabriela and Virginia provide examples of how the stories of their lives as feminists are constructed following a common pattern. In their stories, there is a repeated emphasis on the struggles with, resistance, challenge and opposition to patriarchal practices and discourses. They resist the dominant patriarchal discourses around how girls and women 'should be' in different times; they construct 'oppositional worldviews' (hooks 2000). Therefore, I have argued that in this way they are constructing counter narratives to patriarchal discourses and practices. This narration and telling of a life occurs through the patterns, repeated contents and the 'textual refrains' present in a story (Hemmings 2011), as discussed in chapter one. The narratives become a form of 'discursive resistance' that aimed to 'challenge and disrupt hegemonic framing of social realities' (McKenzie-Mohr and LaFrance 2014, 7) as shown in chapter four. These women, despite having experienced patriarchal practices and discourses in different ways and different times, have a common way of articulating their stories as counter narratives to patriarchy. Another feature of these counter narratives is the way in which my participants positioned themselves as protagonist of their stories, as 'authors of their own lives' (Casey 1993). Nevertheless, their 'agency of self representation' (Munro 1998) does not mean that my participants do not acknowledge the restrictions under which they have lived. I have argued that this is visible in their narratives as they do not depict themselves as heroines; that is to say great characters that overcome everything by themselves following a traditional heroic masculine narrative. On the contrary, they recognize the restrictions and the limitations under which they live and act in the world. At the same time, they do not position themselves as victims in their narratives; despite their experiences of violence, discrimination and oppression in varying forms. Their emphasis in their narratives is on what they did to overcome those situations and what enabled them to follow alternative paths as women. In summary, this relates to how they had lived their lives, resisting patriarchal practices and discourse as feminists. For instance, as presented in chapter four, Gabriela told of her experiences with her patriarchal father, but she emphasises what she did

and the opportunities she had to improve her life, to educate herself later on as an adult woman, learning ‘how to use words’ to defend her ideas.

Significant women and imagined sisterhood

In chapter five, I presented the findings regarding the construction of feminist subjectivities in the ‘encounter with significant women’ that challenge patriarchal regimes in different times. These encounters took two different forms, interpersonal relationships and what I have called the ‘imagined sisterhood’. I used two core narratives, Andrea and Esperanza, to examine the influences of significant women upon them through interpersonal relationships; that is to say one to one relationships and also the encounters with women in collectives and women only spaces throughout their formative years and adult lives. Secondly, through the thematic analysis of three core cases I have addressed significant women encountered through reading, that I addressed as an ‘imagined sisterhood’ that sustained, nourished and gave a sense of belonging to a larger feminist collectivity. Here I want to highlight the importance these significant women have in terms of building a feminist subjectivity. This is another key empirical finding, in the sense that it acknowledges a variety of forms that this can take: interpersonal relationships in the family of origin as in Andrea with her feminist mother, interpersonal relationships with likeminded peers with whom to explore alternatives ways of being and experiment with different form how to challenge and resist patriarchal practices. Andrea and Esperanza had this experience of sharing interest and beliefs with other women as showed in chapter four.

Furthermore, a common feature in some narratives is that my participants have been inspired by significant women through reading books and women’s history, or what I have called ‘imagined sisterhood’. As argued in chapter five, this imagined sisterhood took the form of a bond, an imagined relationship with these women that nourished my participants’ feminist development. This bond is a mixture of an intellectual and emotional connection that provides inspiration, support, and frameworks to understand my participants’ experiences; allowing the connection of the personal and the political (Middleton 1993); acknowledging that there is a systemic dimension in women’s oppression. I also want to highlight that these discoveries of ‘imagined sisterhood’ have real consequences in the life of these teachers,

they are not only 'role models' as some of them said, but also they actually help them act in the world.

This 'imagined sisterhood' as I have conceptualized it is something that can be sketched within some biographical accounts of the feminist researcher (Hercus 2005; Middleton 1993) but has not been very much elaborated. Ahmed with her idea of a 'companion book' is closer to my way of elaborating it, despite the fact that she emphasised the material dimension, the words, and the text. However, she also states, as exposed in chapter five, how the words of Lorde touched her, which I see as this 'imagined sisterhood', one who becomes a sustained companion, and that connects the experiences of another woman to her experiences, not because of being the same, but because of being or going through similar issues. These issues are what I have called the stories of women struggling with patriarchy, which are thus plural, not just one story. In addition, I have highlighted how this 'imagined sisterhood' represents a dialogue across time and beyond differences. For instance, in the case of Gabriela, she was inspired by Victorian women and their struggles with patriarchal practices, and attributes the ability to 'change her life' to those women. Similarly is the case of Virginia, who found inspiration in de Beauvoir's novel, made changes in her life as well as she felt interpellated by de Beauvoir's ways of thinking and how she portrayed the world and women's places in the world. Another example is found in the case of Andrea, who encountered in African American women novelists an inspiration in term of possible actions in her life, acknowledging the stories of 'ordinary women that did extraordinary things' and how she could follow a similar path.

Feminist subjectivities, 'thinking-doing' and non oppositional resistance

In chapter six I presented my focus on the construction of feminist subjectivities in the neoliberal era, which relates to my participants' experiences in terms of their recent past or present. The main empirical findings here are related to the ways in which my participants construct and reconstruct their feminist subjectivities through their 'thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) and the 'off kilter or non oppositional resistance' (Butz and Ripmeester 1999) enacted in the pedagogical and activist arena. Drawing on the narratives of all fifteen participants, I have illustrated how postwar and

neoliberal generation teachers deal with neoliberal patriarchy, especially in the educational arena, where neoliberal logics are strongly enforced by gendered educational reforms and policies (Arnot 2007; Lambert 2004; Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012; Mahony 2000).

What has been noticeable in the pedagogical arena is that my participants have a clear awareness of the distance between their 'ethical thinking-doing' (Davies 2016) as feminists with oppositional views (hooks 2000), and the institutional values and mandates reinforced by gendered patriarchal discourses. My participants are part of the educational system in the sense that they have to comply with procedures and forms of control, but they are able to exercise micro resistance, generally as 'off kilter' or non oppositional resistance to gendered neoliberal policies within the educational system. This was a salient characteristic in the way teachers negotiated their feminist subjectivities and worldviews in a profession which has restricted the autonomy of teachers, standardized the process of teaching and learning, and heavily structured the life of teachers. Oppositional resistance in this scenario seems exceptional, as the example provided by Gabriela when she refused to teach 'Jack the Ripper', arguing against a sexist curriculum, as presented in chapter six.

For all of my participants, 'off kilter' resistance was more likely to be enacted together with their feminist politics in the classrooms, remaining still a 'location of possibility' (hooks 1994), even under neoliberal times. In some cases, their micro resistance and feminist politics was also possible through special projects or initiatives. For these feminist teachers, both kind of spaces are a 'space of power and influence' (Newman 2012) where to 'think-do' their everyday feminisms. Regarding my participants' activism in the unions under neoliberal times, there seems to be more space for oppositional resistance, as well as non oppositional resistance, particularly in the case of postwar generation teachers. This is illustrated in the case of Andrea, Esperanza and Bridget, who participated in a union committed to gender equality, where they have found space for their feminist activism. The neoliberal generation teachers were members of the unions, but not so actively involved. However, I cannot say that this is a general characteristic as some postwar generation teachers were also not actively engaged with their unions, and thus to ascertain this further, a broader research sample would be needed.

Empirical theoretical contribution: experiential resources and operationalization of the concept subjectivities

When considering the whole thesis and the arguments made in chapter four, five and six, I have come to reflect that those relational aspects that contributed to feminist subjectivity formation could be thought of as resources, or perhaps could be called 'experiential resources'. In a similar tone, Ahmed states that 'experiences [...] give us resources' (Ahmed 2017, 235). Based on my findings, I can suggest that each data chapter presented a different set of 'experiential resources' that my participants used to construct their feminist subjectivities in a relational way. A first set of 'experiential resources' are the 'events in time' as presented in chapter four; another set are the relationships with significant women through interpersonal relationships and imagined sisterhood as explored in chapter five; and another set of experiential resources the ways of 'thinking-doing' and micro resistance in the educational arena and the union developed in chapter six.

However, these experiential resources were not always accessible to each participant, but each one has accessed at least to one or more of them throughout the narrative that they told. It depended on biographical and historical circumstances, and other individual characteristics, such as personality for instance. This relates to the idea that subjectivities are contingent (Blackman et al. 2008). For example, as analysed in the different chapters, the feminist subjectivity of Andrea showed that she had accessed a variety of resources all through her life, some by chance, and others by searching for them. She grew up in the 1960s having received the influences of a visible feminist movement (events in time); she had a feminist mother, feminist peers when growing up, experiences of women only spaces and collective spaces where she found significant women (chapter five); she read prolifically and found 'imagined sisterhood' with African American writers (chapter five); she exercised micro resistance to patriarchal practices and discourses in her classroom and also had the opportunity to lead an educational project wherein to exercise her feminist politics; and finally she was highly engaged in her union and as well as other forms of activism. All

these different 'experiential resources' contributed to the construction of her feminist subjectivity.

In contrast, other participants, such as Gabriela and Virginia, found less varied resources on which to construct their feminist subjectivities. Gabriela received the influences of academic feminism in the 1980s as a mature student (events in time in chapter four); drew on the 'imagined sisterhood' she constructed with significant women in history as examined in chapter five and experienced and exercised resources via her pedagogical feminist 'thinking-doing'. In the case of Virginia who grew up in the 1980-90s, with a less visible feminist movement and the presence of 'postfeminist sensibilities' (Gill 2007) in a neoliberal culture, chapter four discussed the events in time that contributed to her subjectivity. This was predominantly experientially constructed by an 'imagined sisterhood' with several significant women through her early and prolific reading as presented in chapter five; and her pedagogical micro resistance to patriarchal practices and discourses, as well as her individual activism outside the profession.

Summing up, all these 'experiential resources': events in time, relationships to significant women and experiences of 'thinking-doing' resistance to patriarchal discourses and practices can contribute to the construction of feminist subjectivities. My participants constructed and sustained a feminist subjectivity through the accumulation of resources provided by their life experiences. They are part of a 'survival kit' borrowing from Ahmed's 'killjoy survival kit' (2017). This way of thinking about subjectivities is a way of operationalizing a very abstract concept. In that sense, I consider that my research makes a theoretical contribution, 'thinking-researching' on feminist subjectivities with a relational approach. This is an open ended model way of thinking about the construction of feminist subjectivities as different kinds of resources can be experienced and added, depending on personal and historical circumstances.

Finally, this research has provided feminist knowledge in the sense that it contributed to understanding the construction of feminist subjectivities and the visibility of everyday feminism as made possible in the case of feminist schoolteachers in neoliberal times. My research has also provided knowledge that can potentially help to promote changes in the lives of feminist teachers and the everyday feminist, who search actively for these

experiential resources in their own processes of constructing everyday feminism; it is a 'feminist knowledge for...' (Stanley 2013b).

Limitation of the study

My relational and narrative approach to feminist subjectivities had left out some psychological dimensions that played also a role in subjectivities constructions, such as the unconscious and personality features of participants. I acknowledge those issues. Nevertheless, this thesis has a sociological emphasis rather than psychological, where I bring to the fore the social, the implications of the individual within the social, as well as a non binary vision of individual and society; in sum, emphasising the social character of the subject and experiences.

Regarding the method used, the limitations point to the fact that working with life stories meant researching on partialities. It is not possible to have access to the whole life. Life stories are partial accounts because the respondents selected what to tell and also the researcher selects what to emphasise. It is a 'co-construction' (Stanley 2017, also Plummer 2001), involving my participants' processes of meaning making and my own. Therefore, I made explicit my assumptions and starting point; I analysed the conditions of production of the interviews, my standpoint as researcher, including issues of positionality and reflexivity. Furthermore, these narrative accounts of their lives are contingent and historical in the sense they are narrated in a particular moment in time, the present neoliberal era, as presented with more detail in chapter two. Hence, it is not the aim of this research to tell the 'true' story of these lives, instead it is to understand the process by which feminist schoolteachers make sense of their lived experiences, constructing a sense of self.

In addition, there are some limitations related to my position as researcher. As an international student, my condition of 'outsider' to the English society, to the English educational system and to English feminisms have limited my understanding of feminist English schoolteachers and their society. However, to be an outsider can have some advantages, as for instance, not taking for granted issues that could be important, as everything is new and unknown.

Another restriction of this research is that it is not a comparative analysis of postwar and neoliberal generation teachers, because I have worked with a small group of teachers of which five were from the neoliberal generation and ten from postwar generations. This could create a further line of inquiry to establish a comparative approach to both generations. This would also imply deepening the characteristics and influences of each era upon the subjectivities of both generations, and deepen the analysis of how the neoliberal era influenced them all. Moreover, this research does not provide data to generalize its results, as this is not the aims of qualitative research. Nevertheless, the findings can resonate with other similar groups of people. For instance, in relation to other everyday feminism research, this could be illuminating and equally for other research into subjects engaging in practices of micro resistance under neoliberal rationalities.

Why are these findings important?

For feminist and non feminist schoolteachers, it is interesting to know about how contemporary feminist teachers deal with neoliberal patriarchy and neoliberal education systems. In addition, this study on everyday feminism and feminist subjectivities could be an inspiration and way of legitimatizing their own and others' lives and pedagogies. My research can resonate with the experiences and subjectivities of other kinds of everyday feminists, in the sense that they are ordinary people, situated in micro social spaces of power, but at the same time still making extraordinary contributions to challenge patriarchal institutions, discourses and practices in its different expressions. This research is also a contribution to knowledge in the area of subjectivity construction, specifically under neoliberal times, concerning how individuals manage to actively engage in practices of self production in times of heavy investment in the disciplining of the self and the production of neoliberal subjects. This research can also resonate with those interested in understanding how individuals under restrictive circumstances enact micro resistance, and specifically how off kilter resistance or non oppositional resistance can be enacted.

Ways forward in future research

There are several areas that could be pushed forward starting from this research point. I will mention a range and then focus on a few. Research on the construction of counter narratives could be an area of interest; exploring the links of counter narrative with micro resistance under neoliberal times. Another topic is to work on everyday feminism related to different kinds of profiles, trying to identify similarities and differences within the everyday feminist subjectivities of schoolteachers. Feminist subjectivities and the connections with feminist activism could be another area of research. Further work could be done in pursuing a comparative analysis of the different generations of women, postwar and neoliberal, in order to establish and process differences and commonalities in construction of feminist subjectivities within feminist politics, the kind of activism they are engaged with and the kind of narratives they construct.

My research has opened new interest and questions regarding the links between feminist subjectivities and micro resistance under neoliberal times. This is an area that would be interesting to deepen asking questions such as: what are the links between the production of feminist subjectivities, the resistance to neoliberal patriarchy and the possibilities of resistance when constructed as neoliberal subjects. These issues imply the need to pay more attention to neoliberal rationalities and the ways of producing subjects under neoliberal times. In connection with this line of inquiry, it could be interesting to research whether the findings of this research resonate with other countries and feminist subjects located in other contexts. For instance, this research could be replicate in my country of origin, Chile, which is also a society highly impacted by neoliberal rationalities, privatization of education and processes of individualization which could be an interesting scenario to compare with. Despite feminism not having a very strong presence in contemporary Chilean society due to patriarchal practices and discourses being dominant in conjunction with conservative forces, there are some spaces where feminist and women's movements have influences which could be investigated.

To finalise this thesis, I would like to reflect on my process of researching and learning throughout it. It has been a difficult process, however it has being enriching, productive and illuminating for me as researcher, as a

woman and as a feminist. I have reaffirmed the links between personal and political by putting flesh to the bones, understanding the multiplicity and complexity of the process of constructing a subjectivity, and specifically a subjectivity in resistance to patriarchy. I have come to realize how complexity and multiplicity are part of subjectivities and the social reality we live in but at the same time I am amazed by the capacity of individual feminist women, dealing with that complexity, making sense of it and constructing a life through their 'ethical thinking-doing'. They do not have doctoral degrees but they have accumulated a crucial knowledge on dealing with, challenging and resisting patriarchy, they accumulated a 'toolkit' of resources to live a feminist life. This also makes me reflect and acknowledge my own toolkit of resources I have accumulated during this research process and through my life that has brought me to this point. I am very grateful to all my participants for this realisation and all that I have learned from them. I have also learnt about the endurance, courage and abilities of a group of 'ordinary women that do extraordinary things', quoting Andrea, one of my participants. Feminist schoolteachers that contribute with their everyday feminism to make this world a better place for children, who contribute with their micro resistance and counter narratives to open possibilities of becoming for others and contribute to the goal of gender justice.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: first round adapted life story Interview schedule

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' lives and their stories of activism where they are committed to challenge gender inequalities in England. I will ask some questions related with this. Please feel free to give me your opinion whatever it is because there are no good or bad answers, and remember all information is confidential. If something is unclear, or if you have any doubts, please ask me at any time.

Icebreaker question and introduction to topic

1. How did you become a teacher?

- Why, when, where
- Childhood/ Youth influences, family, friends, diverse social/cultural experiences
- School experiences and influences (primary, secondary, college), teachers, classmates, ideas

Main topic questions

2. How did you become interested/ aware/ engaged with ... gender/feminist issues?

- Why, when, where?
- Influences, persons/relationships; experiences/places; ideas;
- Awareness, when, why, inspirations and impacts on your personal awareness
- Own experiences of sexism, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, exclusion of any type (sex, gender, class, race, and ethnicity)
- Contradictory and ambivalent experiences with femininity/ masculinity and sexuality
- Kinds of pedagogies experienced at school, college, university
- Participation in educational experiments
- Participation in groups/organizations/ volunteering
- Incidence of political/social movements
- Exposition of ideas of social justice, alternative/radical frameworks, feminist ideas
- Access to diverse social/cultural background/ experiences

3. How did you become an activist related with gender and or feminism?

- Why, when, where?
- Influences, persons/relationships; experiences/places; ideas;
- Decision to get involved, to act

- Own experiences of sexism, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, exclusion of any type (sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity)
- Contradictory and ambivalent experiences with femininity/ masculinity and sexuality
- Kinds of pedagogies experienced at school, college, university
- Participation in educational experiments
- Participation in groups/organizations/ volunteering
- Incidence of political/social movements
- Exposition of ideas of social justice, alternative/radical frameworks, feminist ideas
- Access to diverse social/cultural background/ experiences

4. What does it mean to be a gender/ feminist/ activist teacher in the current context? Inside/outside the classroom/ school

- What do you do, what are the implications?
- How you feel about it?
- What motivates you?
- How do other people react to your position?
- Difficulties that arise / obstacles / problems / conflicts /struggles/ contradictions
- How do you manage any difficulties / strategies to deal with
- Who supports you (helpers/allies/ networks)

Final questions

5. Finally, do you want to add something?

- Any topic you want to elaborate on, thinking back on the interview
- Anything that matters to you

6. Do you have any question to ask me?

Final words

If I have any doubts may I contact you again?

Can you provide me with contacts (name and email) of people you think could be a potential participant for the research?

Thank you very much for your time and help.

Appendix 2: example of part of the operational matrix for the adapted life story interview

Research Questions (RQ)	Dimensions	Variables	Interview Questions (IQ)
How do these teachers become aware of gender issues and develop an interest in gender and/ or feminism?	Awareness gender differences, discrimination and feminism	<p>Awareness: when, why, influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own experiences of sexism, discrimination, oppression, marginalization, exclusion of any type (sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity) - Contradictory and ambivalent experiences with femininity/ masculinity and sexuality - Kinds of pedagogies experienced at school, college, university - Participation in educational experiments - Participation in groups/organizations/ volunteering - Incidence of political/social movements - Exposition of ideas of social justice, alternative/radical frameworks, feminist ideas - Access to diverse social/cultural background/ experiences 	How did you become interested/aware of gender/feminist issues?

Appendix 3: general information schedule

Please, fill it with your information.

CONTACT INFORMATION (for contact purposes only)

Name, _____ Mobile, _____
City, _____

SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC INFO

Date of birth, _____
Sex, Female ____ / Male ____ / Other ____
Partnership, Single ____ / Married-partner ____
Children, Yes ____ / No ____ Number, ____ Ages, _____

PROFESSIONAL INFO

Years working as teacher, _____
Current Working scheme, Full time ____ / Part-time ____
Current position/role at school, _____
Teaching Subject, _____
Type of school, primary ____ / secondary ____ / other (please state) _____
Name of the school, _____
Type of students, (general characterization, class, race, gender) _____

Teaching qualification, _____
Degree Subject (if different), _____
Specialization/ Lifelong learning,

- Courses (describe) _____
- Diplomas (describe) _____
- Master (describe) _____
- Other (specify) _____

ACTIVIST PROFILE

NUT participation, Year of joining NUT? _____ Current position/role, _____

Partnership in other organizations and / or Special Interest Groups,

Name	Role/ position	Year of joining

Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix 4: informed consent

Informed consent Interview N. _____
Study, Gender Activism and teacher's lives in England

Date, _____

Researcher: Heidi Fritz Horzella, Faculty of Social Sciences, Dept. of Sociology, the University of Warwick.

Sponsors: Advanced Human Capital Programme-National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research CONICYT- CHILE (Government of Chile) and the University of Warwick

Purpose of the research: This study will contribute to the sociological analysis of teachers' lives including personal, professional and political issues related with challenging gender inequalities. The focus is on the lives of teachers that are committed to challenging gender inequalities through pedagogical and activist work. It will also reveal teachers' points of view about their work and gender activism, enriching the comprehension of teachers' lives under the current context within England.

What you will be asked to do in the research: You will be asked to take part in this study during different times of the academic year 2013/2014. Your participation in the study includes one or more interviews and if you are agreeable possibly observation of your practices as a gender activist teacher. Topics to be analysed will be to do with your experiences of being a teacher committed to challenging gender inequalities, and any pedagogical and activist work you do in the UK.

Risks and discomforts: I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you: Although there will be no direct benefit for taking part in this study, it will contribute to developing knowledge about teachers' role and contributions to feminist and pro-feminist activism. The results of the study will be disseminated as broadly as possible, including academic and practitioner conferences.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the nature of the on-going relationship you may have with The University of Warwick or me, either now or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason. If you decide to stop or to refuse to answer particular questions, it will not affect your relationship with me, The University of Warwick, or any other group associated with this project.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information.

Questions about the research: If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Heidi Fritz Horzella, either by telephone at 07442762105 or by e-mail, H.S.Fritz-Horzella@warwick.ac.uk

The academic supervisors of this project are Professor Christina Hughes and Dr Cath Lambert, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick.

This research conforms to the standards of the British Sociological Association guidelines (BSA).
<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>.

Legal Rights and Signatures,

I _____, consent to take part in the study '**Gender Activism and teacher's lives in England**' conducted by Heidi Fritz Horzella. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature Participant

Date

Signature Researcher

Date